

HOLDING UP YOUR CORNER

GUIDED CONVERSATIONS

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

The death of Michael Brown at the hands of Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson in 2014 became the impetus for nationwide protests against police brutality and racial profiling in America, forcing individuals and the media to grapple with the increasing racial tensions that all too often result in the deaths of black Americans.

It has been nearly three years later, and the racial chasm seems to be wider than before, especially on social media outlets that allow blocking, unfriending, and attempting to make a cogent argument in 140 characters or less. It's easier to unfollow someone than to engage in difficult conversations like this. It's also easier to dismiss someone else's perspective that doesn't agree with our favorite news source's narrative or our own experiences. But this isn't healthy. It's not productive. And it certainly isn't how things *ought* to be. It's time to have a real conversation that leads to real action.

Thank you for stepping up and out to facilitate that kind of conversation. Thank you for recognizing things are not as they ought to be, and thank you for committing to work toward equity for all people. The first step toward racial justice is a relational one—if we can't communicate with each other, we can't move forward. This resource is just the first step in what may feel like a marathon toward justice and equity for those “hollering” in your community.

Leading conversations about difficult topics such as race can be a little scary, but anyone who approaches this work with a loving heart and an open mind can facilitate a conversation. You don't need to be an expert; you don't even need to have facilitated this sort of conversation before.

How to Use This Guide

Holding Up Your Corner: Guided Conversations on Race is a resource to help pastors and other faith leaders address issues of race and inequity in their communities. It is a six-hour group experience with participant books and a DVD including video content for each conversation segment. Each participant should have a copy of the participant book. The conversation includes the presentation of key content through brief video clips, activities, and guided discussion in small groups around tables, as well as times for sharing with the whole group.

This facilitator's guide will walk you through planning and implementing your group experience. It provides helpful tips for facilitating difficult conversations, discussion prompts, and video descriptions to aid you in building an experience tailored to your community's needs and perspectives.

In addition to this guide and the DVD resource, you will need:

- *Holding Up Your Corner: Talking about Race in Your Community*—you, as facilitator, and any other key leaders in your faith community should read the main book, which is written for pastors and other faith leaders
- *Holding Up Your Corner Participant Book: Guided Conversations about Race*—one per participant

As a facilitator, you should familiarize yourself with as much of the material as possible by reading all available *Holding Up Your Corner* resources, especially the articles “A Guide to Language and Terminology about Race” and “What Happened in My Corner” in the appendix of the participant book. These will provide basic definitions of commonly used terms and basic background information on F. Willis Johnson’s experience in Ferguson.

This guide is intended to be an aid for facilitators, not a script. While you will find suggested phrasing, timelines, and helpful hints, we know that each Guided Conversation will be different. You will have the opportunity to build your own experience in the following pages of this resource.

Don’t wait until you are ready. You may never feel ready, but if you believe this conversation is important, you will find that you have what you need.

Planning and Implementing Your Guided Conversation

The first step to fostering a conversation in your community is to get the date on your calendar! For many of us, just deciding to do something and making the commitment is half the battle.

Other faith leaders in your community may have done this before. If you need support or help, ask someone with experience to come alongside you the first time

you lead this conversation. Or ask them for advice and encouragement as you prepare.

There may be someone in your church or group who is better suited to the task of leading this conversation than you are. If that is the case, ask and empower that person, and assist in all the ways that you are able.

BUT do not spin your wheels in thinking and preparing and discussing in advance. Know that you will probably make some mistakes or say something not quite the way you intend. That is OK! Give yourself permission to do what you can, and know that God will use it. The main thing is simply to take the authority that you have been given to *act*.

PLANNING SCHEDULE

The following is a suggested timeline for planning and implementing a Guided Conversation in your community:

3–5 Months Before

- Begin praying for the event and those who will participate in the Guided Conversation.
- Begin reading through materials and additional suggested resources.
- Recruit others to come alongside you to make this event happen. Meet with your team and delegate responsibilities.
- Set the date on your calendar and all other public and relevant calendars.
- Reserve a location that is large enough to hold the number of people you expect to attend. Consider reserving a room at a local school, a hotel banquet room, or other venue, especially if your church facility cannot accommodate the event.
 - The room should have a sound system with microphone for the facilitator, a way to play the video clips (DVD), and a way to display presentation slides if you are using them (included in the *Holding Up Your Corner* resources).
 - If possible, have two extra microphones to pass around the room for group sharing times.
 - The room should be able to accommodate participants seated at round tables for six or—at the most—eight people. You may also use long tables, and have people sit across from one another in groups of four.

- Prepare a budget.
 - Be sure to include all *Holding Up Your Corner* resources for the facilitator. Each participant will need a participant book. Determine whether or not you will cover those costs or if each individual will purchase his or her own guide.
 - You may need to rent a space or the above-mentioned equipment if your church cannot accommodate the event.
 - Consider providing snacks and coffee for morning and afternoon breaks.
 - If you have the funds, providing lunch on site will allow you to adhere more strictly to your schedule. You may want to include lunch in a registration fee.
 - Leave appropriate margin for promotional and advertising costs and table supplies: pens, paper, etc.
- Set goals for number of participants.
- Create a registration plan. Registration is important, as you will need to preorder a participant book for each registered participant. You will also need to determine how to collect payment for participant books if your budget does not cover that cost.

- Consider utilizing the following methods to gauge interest and plan for accurate numbers:
 - Hard-copy registration forms
 - Google Forms
 - Facebook Event
 - Allow at-the-door registration. If you do this, order extra copies of the participant book.

- Develop a promotional and advertising strategy. Be sure to provide accurate information: what, when, where, cost, how to register, and deadline to register. Consider utilizing the following communication channels:
 - Internal and external church communications
 - Social Media (individual posts, Facebook Event, sharing on community group pages, etc.)
 - E-mail blasts
 - Newspaper
 - Community bulletin boards in public areas
 - Personal connections (Do not underestimate the power of a face-to-face “ask.”)

- Extend an open invitation to your congregation and the broader community. Include people from education, healthcare, city government, civic organizations, law enforcement, business, etc. Make the invitation for all, not just hand-selected people in your community. Or—if that seems too much to take on—hold the first conversation (or two or three) with leaders in your congregation, or perhaps your leaders and those from another church in your area. Those leaders can then share about their experiences with others in the

church and community, laying the groundwork for you to lead subsequent conversations with a broader group.

1–2 Months Before

- Continue promotional strategy.
- Meet with your team to make sure all are on the same page.
- Continue reading through materials and additional suggested resources.
- Enlist volunteers to serve as greeters, to sign people in at a registration/welcome table, to serve refreshments and lunch, to run the audio and video systems, and to clean up after the event. Also have two volunteers ready to pass the microphone around during group sharing.

2–4 Weeks Before

- Order the participant books. Each participant should have one copy. Make your best estimate for how many may register after you order or show up the day of the event, and order accordingly.
- Finish reading through materials and additional suggested resources.
- Outline your Guided Conversation Plan.
- Prepare slides and video content according to your Guided Conversation Plan.

1–2 Weeks Before

- Finalize details: snacks, coffee, lunch, table supplies, technology, room setup.
- Think through the event and anticipate what your participants might need and what will make them feel at ease and well cared for.

1 Day Before

- Set up room, including a registration table and welcome area.
- Make the room as comfortable as you can; adjust the temperature, lighting, etc.
- Set all tables with pens, colored markers, index cards or sticky notes, *Holding Up Your Corner* participant books (one at each seat), and brightly colored sheets of construction paper (one for each person). If budget allows, you might add bright tablecloths and potted plants, snacks, or other items.
- Prepare all technology. It is in your best interest to run through all slides and soundcheck with your tech guru.
- Prepare a space for mingling during breaks.

Day of Guided Conversation

- Arrive at least one hour early.
- Finish last-minute preparations.
- Be sure to start and end at the publicized times. But plan a 45-minute window before and after the event for gathering, refreshments, and visiting.
- Enlist your team to welcome participants and run the registration table.
- We discourage using assigned or manipulated seating for the conversation. It is best to allow people to self-seat. However, as people arrive for the event you might encourage them to sit with people they do not know, rather than their friends or the people they came with. Make the suggestion, but let people sit where they are comfortable, and don't make it a big deal.
- The audio technician should play music softly before the event and during table discussion times if possible.
- Before you begin, point out the nearest restrooms and any other helpful notes about the facility and the day's schedule.
- Let participants know that their conversations are not being recorded in any way. Ask them not to use any recording devices. Remind them to silence their cell phones.
- Pause once during the morning session and once during the afternoon session for a brief stretch and bathroom break. Decide in advance where in the conversation you think this will work best, and include this in your facilitator guide notes.

FACILITATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Prepare

- Before facilitating this conversation, examine your own biases on the topic to ensure that you can remain neutral while leading discussion. Remind yourself to remain neutral throughout the experience. Model active listening.
- Study the materials thoroughly before facilitating a dialogue. Pastors and other faith leaders should read *Holding Up Your Corner: Talking about Race in Your Community* by F. Willis Johnson and *Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love* by William H. Willimon. These books will provide foundational understanding, empowering you to lead wisely.
- Be ready for the event physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally so that you will have stamina and grace. Your preparation will set the tone.

Guiding the Conversation

- Keep the conversation focused and on schedule. It is important to address questions and allow participants ample time to process their thoughts; however, as facilitator, you must ensure that the conversation stays on topic and that the timeline of the event is adhered to. Think of yourself as the bumper guards in a children's lane at a bowling alley. Give the conversation some leeway, but do not let it get out of the lane.
- Ensure all participants feel comfortable enough to contribute. Invite quiet participants to speak up, and encourage participants who dominate the circle to listen to others.

- Handle any issues, tensions, or conflicts that arise by moving the conversation. If something troubling is said, give other participants the chance to address it (example: Does anyone have a different opinion?). It may be helpful for you to rephrase comments to achieve clarity (example: I believe you are saying _____. Is that what you meant?).
- Consider providing a Conversation Covenant to keep the conversation productive and grounded in your common faith (suggested covenants provided at the end of this guide). Review the covenant at the beginning of each session and refer to it when necessary. For example: “Let’s look again at our covenant, which asks us to give everyone a chance to speak before sharing a second time.”
- Ensure that the conversation is oriented around dialogue rather than debate. Debate focuses on winning while dialogue focuses on finding and exploring common ground and understanding. Encourage participants to keep an open mind, to listen to opinions that differ from their own, and to seek to understand rather than influence one another.

Continuing the Conversation

- At the end of the session, ask participants to complete a brief evaluation form so that you can improve the conversation for next time. Also plan a time to debrief the session with a few colleagues or participants.
- Facilitate a way for next steps and continued connection to happen. This should be contextual, ways that make sense and are comfortable for your community. You might agree together to set a date for a second conversation, including new people. You might set up smaller ongoing action groups based on conclusions made by participants at the event. You may ask someone to set up a closed group on Facebook or another social media site

where people can continue the conversation and begin to gather around particular actions.

Remember

- Give yourself—and the participants—permission to do and say the “wrong” things. Be comfortable being uncomfortable, and share that expectation with participants. Be courageously vulnerable! Model it for your community, and invite them to lay down their own assumptions and defenses too. Know that the conversation will be awkward, and be OK with that.

YOUR GUIDED CONVERSATION PLAN

The Guided Conversation consists of three elements per segment: a devotional reflection, a teaching portion, and a table activity designed to generate discussion. Text for each element appears in the participant book, but the facilitator is expected to fill in some gaps. For example, you may want to add your own devotional thoughts and a prayer before each segment in addition to the provided scripture or quotation. You may feel comfortable teaching some basic information, but it is likely that you will want to rely on the *Holding Up Your Corner* DVD for ideas and jumping-off points. You will not be able to show every video clip and cover every bit of information provided in the *Holding Up Your Corner* materials. Take the time to “choose your own adventure” as it pertains to you and your community.

As the facilitator, you will need to exegete yourself and your context. If you are more comfortable in a teaching position, you may choose to show fewer video clips; if you prefer generating discussion but are not as comfortable with teaching, you will show more clips. Additionally, your context may need to hear from a voice other than your own. Remember your location and context—a rural setting will generate different types of discussions than an urban setting, and a suburban area will also be distinct. Tailor your discussion to fit the needs of your community rather than to fit a particular expectation. Consider both your gifts and your audience’s receptivity as you prepare your Guided Conversation Plan.

The remainder of this guide provides a suggested timeline for your event, along with suggested video clips and a more detailed suggested script. Read through the suggestions, then adapt this to fit your own context.

SUGGESTED GUIDED CONVERSATION TIMELINE

8:15 AM	Doors open
9:00 AM	Welcome; Segment 1: Orientation
10:00 AM	Segment 2: Empathic Models of Transformation
10:45 AM	Break
11:00 AM	Segment 3: Acknowledge
12:00 PM	Lunch in the Conversation Room, at Conversation Tables
1:00 PM	Segment 4: Affirm
1:45 PM	Break
2:00 PM	Segment 5: Act; Preparation for Next Steps
3:00 PM	Close
3:45 PM	Doors close

SEGMENT 1: ORIENTATION

Welcome (10–15 minutes)

Introduce yourself and your team, and welcome all participants. Explain the purpose of the event and the objective of the Guided Conversation, articulated in pages 1–2 of the participant book. Encourage them to take notes, highlight, underline, and doodle in their copies if they wish.

Housekeeping Items:

- Restroom locations
- Schedule
- Break and lunch information
- Any other information pertinent to your time and space

Introduce Holding Up Your Corner by Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson.

At this point, participants will want to know a little bit about Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson's story.

Who is he?

What are his qualifications for creating such a resource and event like this?

Either explain Johnson's experiences in Ferguson (for help, see "What Happened in My Corner" in the appendix of the participant book, pages 45–48) or:

Watch “Ferguson and the Challenge to Do Better.”

Say:

“The events in Ferguson in August 2014 became a catalyst for nationwide protests, conversation, and scrutiny surrounding racial justice issues. No matter where you stand on this issue, it is the call of God’s people to love all others and to work toward equity and justice for all. It begins with real connection and real conversations with those who are different from ourselves.

“Before we get started, let us pray together: God of all people, strengthen us today. Be with us as we dare to cross barriers for the sake of justice and equity. Help us listen, help us articulate, help us work together for your Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

“The resources before you are called *Holding Up Your Corner*, and perhaps you’re wondering what that even means. Before we go any further, Willis Johnson is going to help us understand what he means when he encourages us to hold up our corner.”

Watch “Introduction.”

Reiterate what holding up your corner means:

“Our corner refers to our physical and social locations—the places we live and work; our communities; places where we can use our influence to speak out against inequity. We hold up our corner by the ways we step up to meet a particular problem, injustice, or inequity, and do something about it.”

Introduce Ground Rules (10–15 minutes)

Say:

“Language is a wonderful thing. We can discuss ideas, communicate with one another to get things done, enjoy conversation between friends around a table. But sometimes, language can also be a barrier, especially when we communicate with others who have different experiences or cultural norms than we do.”

Watch “In What Ways Is language a Barrier for You?”

Say:

“In order to communicate, we must have basic ground rules. It’s true for every language: we have grammar, defined terms, and a cultural understanding of how to communicate through verbal and nonverbal cues. We must be on the same page in order to truly hear one another.”

To introduce the ground rules, choose one of the following proposed options:

1. Watch “Ground Rules for the Conversation.”
2. Invite participants to turn to page vii–ix in the participant book. Read through the Suggested Ground Rules, and affirm that conversations should follow these guidelines.
3. Choose one of the included Conversation Covenants at the end of this guide. Each participant should receive a copy. Read through the covenant, and ask each participant to abide by the covenant throughout the day. Participants may want to sign their own copies of the covenant.
4. Brainstorm your own guidelines. You may want a white board or a large piece of butcher paper to write down the ground rules in a visible manner. Allow the group to agree upon their own Conversation Covenant.
5. Any combination of these options.

Practice Ground Rules (10–15 minutes)

Guide the Conversation

Allow participants to practice the newly adopted ground rules at their tables by answering the **questions on page 3 of the participant book**. If you have time, ask participants to share their experiences in large group.

- How did it feel to practice the ground rules?
- What was easy?
- What was difficult?
- How might we continue to practice these rules outside this Guided Conversation, and how could that influence our relationships?

Your Racial Autobiography (15–25 minutes)

Watch “Racial Autobiography.”

Or explain what a racial autobiography is:

“When we craft our own racial autobiographies, we examine the things that shape us, the things that anchor us, our attitudes, perspectives, behaviors, and preferences, as well as our journey. In this conversation, you may feel uncomfortable. Embrace the awkwardness. In order to move forward, we must take a hard, honest look at our own experiences, biases, and constructs.”

Guide the Conversation

At this time, you may want to show some examples of how to be authentic and transparent even with the tough questions.

*If so, watch: “How Did You First Become Aware of Race?”
or “How Were Your Perceptions Shaped by Family, Church?”*

Direct participants to pages 3–4 of the participant book, which provides questions to help participants construct and share their own racial autobiographies.

Explain that there will not be enough time to answer all the questions provided, but encourage participants to pick one or two they resonate with to discuss at their tables.

If time allows, invite participants to share what their tables discussed and how it made them feel in a large group setting.

SEGMENT 2: EMPATHIC MODELS OF TRANSFORMATION

Opening Reflection (5–10 minutes)

Lead the group in the devotional.

Encourage participants to listen as you slowly and intentionally **read Mark 2:1-5 on page 7 of the participant book**.

Invite them to take notes, doodle, or simply listen as they take in the story of the paralytic and the four men who brought him to Jesus.

You may want to include some large group questions to get the participants thinking and centered.

Prayer:

God of healing, you are the source of hope for us all. Open our hearts, our minds, our eyes, and our ears to each other today so that we may hold up our corners to bring help to those in our community. Amen.

Objective (10 minutes)

Read the objective in the participant book on page 8, or offer your own explanation of the EMT based on your reading and preparation in the prior weeks.

*Watch “Introducing the EMTs”
and “What It Takes to Be an EMT.”*

Table Activity (15–25 minutes)

Guide the Conversation

Direct participants to **discuss the concept of Empathic Models of Transformation and the biblical story** of the paralytic and the four men who held up their corners.

Offer follow-up questions. (If time allows, invite participants to share in the large group.)

- What is different about Empathic Models of Transformation and the way we attempt to “fix” or troubleshoot situations?
- How might heart play a role in justice?

- Who do you most relate to in the biblical story—the hurt or the helpers, or perhaps even the religious leaders?

Optional (5 minutes)

Say:

“Before we take a break, you should know that the EMT model contains three points that we will discuss the remainder of the day: Acknowledge, Affirm, and Act. Let’s take a quick look at what Willis has to say about the basics of these three points.”

Watch: “Acknowledge, Affirm, and Act.”

Break (15 minutes)

SEGMENT 3: ACKNOWLEDGE

Opening Reflection (5–10 minutes)

Lead the group in the devotional.

Encourage participants to listen as you slowly and intentionally read “The Sound of the Genuine” by Howard Thurman on pages 11–12 in the participant book.

Invite them to take notes, doodle, or simply listen as they take in the quotations.

You may want to include some large group questions to get the participants thinking and centered.

Prayer:

God of all, you created each of us uniquely. We are wonderfully made, each with our own strengths and passions. Help us listen to the sound of the genuine in our lives, and help us hear the sound of the genuine in others. Amen.

Objective (10 minutes)

Guide the Conversation

Read the objective in the participant book on pages 12–13, or offer your own explanation of acknowledging the genuine in ourselves and others based on your reading and preparation in the prior weeks.

Acknowledge: To see what is genuine in ourselves and others. To also see what's not right in ourselves and others.

Watch "Acknowledge."

Table Activity: Identifying Strengths (15–20 minutes)

Guide the Conversation

Direct participants to page 13 in the participant book. Explain the provided instructions for the table activity.

Allow time for tables to divide into groups of two or three, then give them time to share their strengths.

If time allows, invite participants to share in large group.

Guiding the Conversation Further (15–25 minutes)

Say:

“Acknowledging our own strengths helps us identify the strengths in others. This is also true for the negative things in our own selves. Acknowledging our human tendencies to categorize and label people helps us identify systems that do the same. Part of the work of acknowledging includes recognizing that race is a social construct, not a scientific fact. For some, this diverges radically from what you have been taught, but let’s listen to Willis as he acknowledges the social construct that we call race.”

Watch “Explanation of Race as a Social Construct.”

Guide the Conversation

Depending on your context, participants may need to unpack this idea.

Invite conversation at tables or in a large group setting, reminding them of the Conversation Covenant to which they all agreed.

Say:

“When we are able to recognize and acknowledge our own social constructs, we are then able to recognize systems and acknowledge when things aren’t quite right. The hope here is that because race is a social construct and not inherent, we can end inequity between people groups. Injustice is a learned behavior, not biology!”

Watch “Challenge to Acknowledge Things Aren’t Right.”

Say:

“Sometimes it is hard to acknowledge that things aren’t right. It is easy to get defensive and try to justify our behaviors and systems that perpetuate inequity. But as the people of God, we cannot turn a blind eye. We can’t continue to sit back and watch as our brothers and sisters of any race continue to suffer. Willis Johnson’s church was willing to acknowledge that things aren’t right in Ferguson by truly listening to what was going on. While responding to things that aren’t as they ought to be may not be easy, we can learn from his congregation how to be a listening church, one that acknowledges the genuine in others and also acknowledges when things aren’t right.”

Watch “How to Be a Listening Church.”

Close in prayer before your lunch break:

God, help us listen for the sound of the genuine in ourselves and in others. Help us also acknowledge when things aren’t as they ought to be. May we be a listening people, committed to helping the hurt and broken. Bless the food we are about to eat, and may the conversations we have over a meal bring us closer together in Christ. Amen.

Lunch (60 minutes)

SEGMENT 4: AFFIRM

Note: this segment contains two parts: Affirm the Other and Affirm the Marginalized.

“Affirm the Other” Opening Reflection (5–10 minutes)

Lead the group in the devotional.

Encourage participants to listen as you slowly and intentionally **read the quotation on page 15 of the participant book.**

Invite them to take notes, doodle, or simply listen.

You may want to include some large group questions to get the participants thinking and centered.

Prayer:

Creator God, you put in each of us your Spirit, the breath of life. Help us embrace our own selves as who we are in you, and help us recognize your own image in others. Amen.

Objective (10–15 minutes)

Guide the Conversation

Read the objective in the participant book on page 16, or offer your own explanation of affirming others based on your reading and preparation in the prior weeks.

Affirm: To see the image of God in others. Seeing ourselves in others, and seeing others in ourselves.

Watch “Affirm.”

Say:

“It isn’t always easy to affirm the image of God in others, especially when they are so very different than our own selves. People groups throughout history have struggled with affirming the ‘other’—people who look, talk, or act different than us. Watch Willis explain the concept of ‘othering.’”

Watch “Explanation of Othering.”

Say:

“Othering takes identifying difference to a whole new level by ascribing value to a person based on distinguishing identifiers. But there is something to be said about the beauty of diversity. When it comes to race, color-blindness is problematic, just as othering is problematic. When we choose to disengage from diversity and difference, we miss out on the beauty of humanity and God’s creativity.”

Watch “Beauty in the Differentness of Others.”

Discussion Activity (15–20 minutes)

Say:

“Othering is dangerous. While it is OK and even important to acknowledge and celebrate difference and diversity, when we begin to ascribe value to a person based on identifiers rather than the image of God we become imbalanced. Those in power or with privilege perpetuate these incorrect value judgments, and the cycle continues. Listen as Willis explains ‘Privilege and Power’ and others share their experiences.”

*Watch “Privilege and Power” and
“Understanding of Privilege and Discrimination.”*

Then say:

“Please take a few moments to complete the Privilege Quiz on pages 34–35. This quiz is meant to help you think about the ways that power and privilege have influenced your lived experiences. The final number does not matter, and there is no value affixed to identifying with any particular lived experience. The quiz is meant to provoke your thoughtful consideration. Once all participants are finished with the quiz, discuss amongst yourselves. You will find questions on pages 16–17 of your participant book to aid your discussion.”

Guide the Conversation

If time allows, invite participants to share in large group.

It is important for participants to grasp the neutrality of privilege and power—neither is inherently bad, and no one should be condemned for having privilege. What we choose to do with our power and privilege is up to us. They can be leveraged for good or evil.

“Affirm the Marginalized” Opening Reflection (5–10 minutes)

Lead the group in the devotional.

Encourage participants to listen as you slowly and intentionally **read Psalm 137 on pages 17–18 of the participant book.**

Invite them to take notes, doodle, or simply listen.

You may want to include some large group questions to get the participants thinking and centered.

Prayer:

O God, you heard the cries of the Hebrews enslaved in Egypt. You heard the cries against the Babylonians in the Psalms. You hear the cries of those oppressed today. Help us to hear as you hear. Amen.

Objective (not included in the participant book) (5–10 minutes)

Say:

“Psalm 137 sounds harsh. This is a song of lament, of hollering. It’s a painful cry from those unheard, which may seem reckless and violent to those who do not understand their pain. We see riots and protests that seem to get out of hand, and a typical response is to condemn the protesters for inciting violence or unrest. But it remains the role of the church to hear—really hear—those who holler. There’s a reason for the hollering, regardless of what form it takes, and it is the job of the church to alleviate pain. We must ask ourselves, ‘Why is there hollering in the first place?’”

Watch “Affirm Pain in Others.”

Activity: Hearing the Hollering (10–15 minutes)

Guide the Conversation

Display photos of hollering.

You may use the ones provided in the *Holding Up Your Corner* resources online, but we strongly encourage you to find photos illustrating ‘hollering’ in your own community.

Check your local news sources for photos of hurting or marginalized people.

Ask participants to reflect on the photos.

- What is your reaction?
- How do the photos make you feel?
- What does each photo make you think?

Allow for some time to share in large groups.

After a few minutes of large group sharing, direct participants to page 19 in the participant book. Give tables a few minutes to discuss the provided questions.

If time allows, invite participants to share in large group.

Break (15 minutes)

SEGMENT 5: ACT

Opening Reflection (5–10 minutes)

Lead the group in the devotional.

Encourage participants to listen as you slowly and intentionally **read the quote provided on page 21 of the participant book.**

Invite them to take notes, doodle, or simply listen. You may want to include some large group questions to get the participants thinking and centered.

Prayer:

God of all, sometimes you transform the world through miracles.

Most times, though, you use people. Let us be the people you use to bring hope and healing to our community.

Objective (5–10 minutes)

Guide the Conversation

Read the objective in the participant book on pages 21–22, or offer your own explanation of acting based on your reading and preparation in the prior weeks.

Act: To do something not out of selfish motivation, but to provoke real and relevant change toward wholeness for the other's benefit.

Watch “Act” and “Break Down Barriers.”

Discussion: How to Be an EMT (15–20 minutes)

Guide the Conversation

Invite participants to open to pages 22–23 in the participant book.

Review the directions for the table activity, and allow participants some time to discuss how they may be an EMT in their own community.

After a few minutes of small group sharing, invite participants to share in large group, and encourage working together to come up with sustainable solutions.

Call to Action (15–20 minutes)

Say:

“Today, we’ve learned the three points of the Empathic Model of Transformation: Acknowledge, Affirm, and Act. Let’s review what each of those mean.”

*Watch “Summary of Acknowledge, Affirm, and Act”
and “Don’t Wait a Single Moment.”*

Say:

“The first step to action is sharing with others your ideas, passions, and gifts. When you share with others, it is likely that those who didn’t participate today will have questions. What was the event like? What did you discuss? Why is it important? What difference will this make? How could someone else get involved?”

Guide the Conversation

Invite participants to turn to pages 23–24 to begin developing an elevator speech.

Give participants time to think, reflect, write, and even share with their tablemates.

If time allows, invite large group discussion.

Open Forum Discussion (15–25 minutes)

Say:

“In the words of Willis Johnson, now that we know better, we have to do better. We cannot be content anymore with talking about the issues. We spent all day doing that, but without action—without love—all this talk is a clanging cymbal. It’s just noise.”

Watch “What are you Going to Do?”

Guide the Conversation

Direct participants to pages 24–25 of the participant book.

Invite them to form small groups of two or three at their tables and discuss the provided questions.

After some time for small group discussion, open up for discussion in the large group.

Encourage and build upon each other’s ideas.

If you sense the Holy Spirit moving, guide the group to develop their ideas into action.

Say:

“Justice and equity begin with individuals committed to making a difference wherever they are. We can’t change the world by ourselves, but we can do what’s right and righteous in our community, in our corner. This group expressed wonderful ideas and excitement for the future, but this is just the beginning. Let’s see how some others have committed to holding up their own corners.”

Watch “How Are You Holding Up Your Corner?”

Say:

“It can start with us. We can make a change for the better right here. This work is too important for us to leave it here today without taking the next step. As you may have noticed, we didn’t complete the participant book, and that’s intentional. The final segment, Next Steps is designed for you to complete with your group or others later. You will find all you need in the Guide, and my hope is that you don’t leave here today until you have designated a date with some other people here to finish Segment Six. You’ll have the opportunity to create an EMT Map of our community, which will inform, enable, and empower you to better identify the hollering and then do something about it.

Watch “Now What?”

Guide the Conversation

Close by thanking those gathered for their energy and honesty and willingness to participate. Also be sure to thank the volunteers and others who helped make the event possible.

End with a prayer:

God of all people—of the oppressed and of the privileged—you have uniquely created each of us. You have gifted each of us in special ways that we submit to your disposal. Mold us to look more like your image day by day, and use us to enact the kingdom here on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us the courage, the boldness, the audacity to acknowledge, affirm, and act in ways that display your love and justice to all people. Help us to hold up our corner. Amen.

Dismiss

SEGMENT 6: NEXT STEPS

A Suggested Next Step begins on page 27 of the participant book. This segment is designed for any participant to facilitate, and you have all the directions you need within those pages.

LIST AND DESCRIPTIONS OF VIDEOS

Willis Johnson Interviews

TITLE	SUGGESTED SEGMENT	SUMMARY
Ferguson and the Challenge to Do Better	Introduction	Willis shares his story of response in the midst of unrest in Ferguson after Michael Brown’s death. He challenges us to “do better” in the face of injustice in our own communities.
Acknowledge	Acknowledge	Willis defines and explains what it means to Acknowledge.
Affirm	Affirm	Willis defines and explains what it means to Affirm.
Race as a Social Construct	Introduction	Willis explains how race is a social construct from which some benefit.
Othering	Introduction, Affirm	Willis defines and explain “othering.”
Act	Act	Willis defines and explains what it means to Act.
Privilege and Power		Willis tells a story to explain privilege and power dynamics. He clarifies how privilege and power are not inherently bad, but can be leveraged in a positive way.
Now What?	Conclusion, Act, Next Steps	Willis commissions us to hold up our corners.

Segment Starters

TITLE	SUGGESTED SEGMENT	SUMMARY
Introduction	Introduction	Willis introduces the Guided Conversation and our call as the Church to engage in loving dialogue and hold up our corners.
Ground Rules	Introduction	Willis offers foundational concepts for people of faith to engage in open and loving dialogue.
Racial Autobiography		Willis explains what a racial autobiography is and encourages us to reflect and share the factors that have made us who we are.
Introducing the EMTs	Empathic Models of Transformation	Willis shares some of his story in Ferguson and retells the biblical story of the paralytic to introduce Empathic Models of Transformation.
Acknowledge, Affirm, and Act	Empathic Models of Transformation or Act	Willis summarizes the three points of Empathic Models of Transformation.
Ferguson, MO, August 2014: How to Be a Listening Church	Acknowledge	
Summary of Acknowledge, Affirm, and Act		Willis summarizes the three points of Empathic Models of Transformation.
Don't Wait a Single Moment	Act	Willis encourages us to act swiftly.
What It Takes to Be an EMT	Next Steps	Willis identifies the need for heart to be an EMT.

What Are You Going to Do?	Next Steps	Willis challenges us to commit to doing something that holds up our corner.
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Conversation Clips

TITLE	SUGGESTED SEGMENT	SUMMARY
Affirm the Hollering	Affirm	What does it mean to you to acknowledge other people's pain, or their painful experiences?
Beauty in the Difference of Others	Affirm	Where do you find beauty and joy in the differentness of others?
Break Down Barriers		What are some ways we can break down barriers?
A Challenge to Acknowledge		How is it challenging for you to acknowledge that things are not right?
How I'm Holding Up My Corner		How are you holding up your corner?
When I First Became Aware of Race		How did you first become aware of your race?
Family and Church—Perception Shapers		How were your perceptions shaped by family, church, or other?
Language as a Barrier		In what ways is language - finding the right words to say - a barrier for you?
The Privilege of Diversity		What is your understanding or experience of privilege? Discrimination?

CREATING YOUR CONVERSATION COVENANT

The Guided Conversation will be most fruitful when participants agree to adhere to a set of ground rules. Ideally, your audience will be full of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. This is good! However, the art of conversation is subject to unspoken cultural and social norms. This may cause tension in a diverse setting, where people may not immediately understand one another. In order to reduce miscommunication, it is imperative to establish parameters for your group.

You may feel comfortable creating your own ground rules based on your group's unique context. Be sure to include respect, mutual exchange of ideas, and active listening in your list. Alternatively, you may use one of the three sample covenants we've provided in the next pages as a starting point, or you may choose to use it without any modification. It is up to you. Be sure that your ground rules reflect the heart of God first, and then your contextual norms.

After you have introduced the ground rules to your audience, it is key that they agree to abide by these rules. This could be a verbal covenant: "Do you agree to follow these guidelines? If so, say, 'I do.'" You may want to have them sign the covenant. Another idea is to have participants sign a poster board or other publicly displayed medium as a reminder throughout the event. Regardless of how the group agrees, be sure people are on board and willing to stretch themselves for the sake of justice and equity for all people. Encourage them to practice these ground rules in their daily lives from now on.

SAMPLE CONVERSATION COVENANTS

Sample Conversation Covenant A

During this Guided Conversation, I covenant with the rest of the group to:

1. Assume the best of my conversation partners.
2. Keep an open mind.
3. Step up and push myself to speak openly and honestly.
4. Step back and push myself to listen intentionally and consistently.
5. Speak from my own experience, using “I” statements rather than “you” statements.
6. Keep confidentiality.
7. Use active listening.

Signature of Participant

Additionally, I covenant to utilize these ground rules after this Guided Conversation. I will strive to speak and listen in a godly manner with those around me for the sake of justice and equity for all people.

Signature of Participant

Sample Conversation Covenant B

During this Guided Conversation, I covenant with the rest of the group to follow John Wesley's Three Simple Rules:

Do No Harm

- Think before I speak
- Beware of judging myself or others
- Be sensitive to differences in communication styles
- Avoid interrupting
- Give everyone a chance to speak before sharing a second time
- Keep confidentiality

Do Good

- Articulate my own thoughts and beliefs by using "I" statements rather than "you" statements
- Listen with a compassionate and curious heart, especially when others' experiences and views are different from mine
- Examine my own assumptions

Stay in Love with God

- Pray for one another and this gathering
- Be faithful in word and deed to our commitment to be a disciples of Jesus Christ
- Trust the Spirit to work in our holy conversations

Signature of Participant

Additionally, I covenant to utilize these ground rules after this Guided Conversation. I will strive to speak in a godly manner with those around me for the sake of justice and equity for all people.

Signature of Participant

Sample Covenant C

During this Guided Conversation, I covenant with the rest of the group to engage in conversation in the following way:

Head

- Remember each person is created in God's image.
- Remember this is a discussion, not a debate. I will check my need to be right at the door.
- Remind myself that different does not equal bad.

Heart

- Assume the best of each person.
- Recognize any negative feelings and let them pass before responding.
- Be mindful of my tone and how it may be perceived.
- Embrace the awkward.

Hands

- Ask clarifying questions.
 - Listen carefully and intentionally.
 - Give the person to whom I am speaking the same grace I wish to be given.
 - I will not interrupt.
 - I will think before I speak, and refrain from thinking about my response while someone else is still talking.
-

Signature of Participant

Additionally, I covenant to utilize these ground rules after this Guided Conversation. I will strive to speak in a godly manner with those around me for the sake of justice and equity for all people.

Signature of Participant