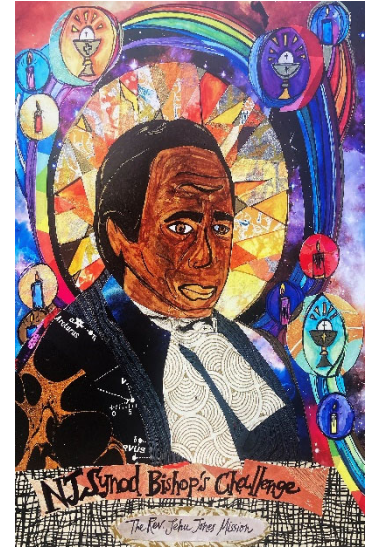


# JEHU'S MISSION: A CONGREGATIONAL BIBLE STUDY

**Learning Objectives:** To invite participants into conversation on what scripture says about injustice and what God says about injustice; to begin learning about how a history of injustice has harmed African Americans; and to explore ways in which participants can join in God's vision of a just future.

## The Big Idea:

God's heart is tuned toward justice that restores. God's justice brings complete shalom peace and healing. We can be encouraged as we read how much God cares about advocating for justice and invites us to join in this restorative work of shalom.



## Things to consider:

1. Consider establishing group Ground Rules. Ask each participant to respond to this: "In order for me to feel that I can participate fully in this conversation, I need this group to \_\_\_\_\_." (Examples: ask for clarification if something isn't understood; agree to stay on this topic; listen for understanding rather than responding, etc.) Make a list of these and poll the group for consensus on the final list. If conversation becomes tense, refer the group back to this list.
2. Consider beginning with a moment of quiet meditation, to allow participants to clear their heads and hearts and to let go of distractions.
3. Consider having participants respond by "invitation" rather than pressure. Invite one person in the group to share. They may choose to decline, then they will invite another person to share. Repeat this until everyone has had an opportunity. Respect the decision of those who decline to share. This also allows quieter people room to speak.

4. Considering taking breaths. When the conversation becomes too heavy or difficult, stop. Ask participants to take a minute to breathe deeply. Check in by asking how each person is feeling (give one-word responses). Stand up and stretch if needed.
5. Consider ways to keep everyone on the subject at hand. Say something like, “These History Notes refer specifically to ways African Americans have experienced harm and loss. While we are aware of many losses and harm done to other groups (Native Americans, Mexican immigrants, Asians, etc.) let’s keep focused on this particular part of our history. Let’s plan to explore other parts of history in the near future, but let’s commit to have the courage to keep our attention on these stories. To grow in our awareness is to acknowledge that harm was done and to see how we can respond to history in a faithful way.”

### HOW TO GUIDE THE CONVERSATION EACH WEEK:

Open with prayer:

O God, in your divine mystery you embrace difference in unity, and you call your people to live in peace with all. We pray for an end to racial and ethnic prejudice. Free us from the dread of difference. Free the church from constricting traditions. Free our society from centuries of violence against the other. Break down the walls that separate your people by color, culture, or religion. Call us to repentance for our sins of racism and prejudice, known and unknown. Transform discrimination into a passion for justice. Guide us to nurture a society that embodies reconciliation and cooperation among all, for the sake of the one who embodies your love, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**<sup>1</sup>

Have someone read the first scripture text (if more than one is listed for the day’s lesson). Allow some quiet time for participants to reflect on what they’ve heard. Then have someone else read the same scripture text (same or different version). Allow more time for reflection.

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<sup>1</sup> From *All Creation Sings*. From [sundaysandseasons.com](http://sundaysandseasons.com). Copyright © 2021 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

Have participants write down words that stand out to them in the reading, or words that come to mind as they listen. Spend a few minutes sharing these aloud, as people feel comfortable doing so.

Spend time reflecting on the questions related to the text(s) for the day's lesson.

Read the Bishop's Challenge History Note for the day's lesson.

Think and reflect on how this history note strikes you. (These questions will be the same for Lessons 1-5).

What emotions or thoughts come to mind?

What troubles you as you listen or read this?

What is the implied or stated promise that was made to African Americans?

How would the fulfillment of this promise have improved the lives of African Americans?

How was this promise broken? Did it happen abruptly or gradually?

What efforts were made to correct this?

What has been the impact on African Americans?

How does this History Note relate to the scripture texts that the participants heard?

**Reflection Verse (each week):** *"[Y]ou shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in." (Isaiah 58:12):* What could God be calling us to repair here? Talk about ways this work of repair could happen, either individually, in our communities, or as a society.

Close with prayer: Holy God, out of your great love for the world, your Word became flesh to live among us and to reconcile us to you and to one another. Rekindle among us the gift of your Spirit so that we seek to live in unity with all people, breaking down the walls that divide, ending the hostility among us, and proclaiming peace to those who are near and to those who are far away; through Christ Jesus, in whom we all have access in the one Spirit to you, both now and forever. **Amen.**<sup>2</sup>

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## BIBLE STUDY PLAN AND SCHEDULE

SCRIPTURE	HISTORY NOTE
<b>Isaiah 58:1-12</b> <b>Isaiah 61:8</b> <b>Luke 4:18-19</b>	WEEK 1: Jehu Jones
<b>Proverbs 20:10</b> <b>Proverbs 29:7</b> <b>Isaiah 10:1-2</b>	WEEK 2: The Compromise of 1877
<b>Deuteronomy 6:4-9</b> <b>Mark 12:28-31</b>	WEEK 3: Black Wall Street/Tulsa Massacre
<b>Jeremiah 31:1-14</b>	WEEK 4: GI Bill – Education
<b>Luke 10:30-37</b>	WEEK 5: The Lutheran Church
<b>Luke 19:1-10</b> <b>Ephesians 2:11-20</b>	WRAP-UP: Repentance, Reconciliation, Restoration

### SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS FOR WEEKLY LESSONS

#### WEEK 1:

**Isaiah 58:1-12** – What are the things we associate with as necessary for worship to happen (a worship space, altar, etc.)? Imagine starting a new worship space or community from scratch – what would you say people need to experience? What are things that might hinder the worship experience? How can restoring relationships (repairers of the breach) be an act of worship? How does practicing justice honor God as an act of worship?

**Isaiah 61:8** – What does this say to us about God’s heart? How do we as Christians “explain away” injustice that we know happens?

**Luke 4:18-19** – Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah here as he begins his public ministry. How does Jesus’ connection to the message of God to Isaiah remind hearers of God’s concern for those on the margins of society? How can this message be upsetting to religious leaders – then and now?

## **WEEK 2:**

**Proverbs 20:10:** In biblical times, stones were used for weights and measures. It was expected that stones that were used were as exact in weight as possible. Dishonest traders often kept stones of different weights and would slip them onto scales to defraud unsuspecting customers. Think of ways in which unsuspecting or trusting people can be taken advantage. What recourse do they have against fraud? What if they have no proof? How do people get justice when injustice seems so common?

**Proverbs 29:7** – How does one’s personal choices affect an entire community or society? Give an example of a time in when “the righteous” faced an uphill battle when confronting injustices committed against them? What made this situation so hard to confront? How was it resolved, if it was? What was the long-term impact?

**Isaiah 10:1-2** – In The Message (paraphrase version of the Bible), this verse reads, “Doom to you who legislate evil, who make laws that make victims...” Reading it this way, how does that feel to you? In what ways can laws victimize people? As people of faith, how can we respond to laws that harm people?

## **WEEK 3:**

**Deuteronomy 6:4-9/Mark 12:28-31** – Moses gives this mandate to the Israelites in the wilderness as they were preparing to enter the Promised Land, a place to be of peace and freedom. Jesus recites this when asked what is the greatest of the commandments. For the new followers of Jesus, how does this teaching prepare them to live into the reign of God that Jesus came to announce? What does it look like to “love your neighbor” as much as, or more than you love, yourself? What are practical ways we can show love and respect for others?

#### WEEK 4:

**Jeremiah 31:1-14** – In 586 BCE, Judah was flattened and destroyed by their enemies. Their dreams of peace and prosperity were gone; grief and loss were all around them. How do you imagine they reconciled their understanding as God’s covenant people and the utter destruction they’d experienced? When we trust God for protection and bad things still happen, how do we talk about this? Where is God when others cause us deep harm?

#### WEEK 5:

**Luke 10:30-37** – Underneath this conversation between a lawyer and Jesus is the unstated: “You know the right thing to do. Just do it.” The lawyer seems to seek a way around doing the right thing. As the Church, how do we do the same? What work-arounds do we create to justify *not* joining in God’s work towards a just future? What excuses do we make? Who suffers as a result of our excuses?

**Luke 19:1-10** – When Zacchaeus meets Jesus, and Jesus invites himself to dinner with Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus responds, “[H]alf of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much”. What prompts Zacchaeus to make such a generous offer without being prompted or accused (at least in this story)? What about Jesus motivates him to make financial amends for his wrongdoing? How can the Church respond proactively to accounts of harm that were done to people?

**Ephesians 2:11-20** - Why do you think these words are important? Do they speak to anything in your own experience of people different from you? How do they make you feel? How do you imagine you might live if Paul is right that Christ has created one humanity in place of all human divisions? What do Paul’s words make you want to do to live like you imagine?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. *A Guide for Leading Conversations on Race, Ethnicity, and Culture In Your Congregation*. Copyright © 1994 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 W. Higgins Rd. Chicago, IL 60631. Revised Edition, 2008.

**WRAP-UP (WEEK 5 OR 6):**

**Repentance, Reconciliation, Restoration** – As you think about the various scripture texts discussed over the past few weeks, and the History Notes on stories of loss and denial to African Americans, what do these three words mean to you: Repentance, Reconciliation, Restoration?

**Repentance** means a complete about-face, to turn completely around. What does it mean to repent as a whole people when we learn of a historic sin against a community? How do you begin such an “about face”? What needs to change in the Church for an about-face to happen in how African Americans have been treated?

**Reconciliation** means to come to a new understanding of peace, to make a relationship right. Racial violence has long made the vision of racial reconciliation seem impossible. Where do you see hope that this can be possible?

**Restoration** means to make someone or something completely whole again. How do we calculate historic loss (emotional, financial, psychological) that African Americans have endured, in order to determine the extent of restoration that is needed? Where do we need to continue these conversations? With whom?