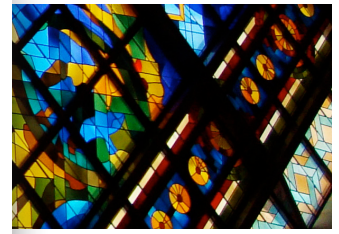




# 40 DAYS OF ENGAGEMENT on *Anti-Racism*



DAY 1

## Becoming an Anti-racist Disciple

*Paul Douglas Walfall*



### Learning

In some ways it seems almost redundant to speak about anti-racism and discipleship. It seems that one assumes the other. Consequently, there is no need to add the two words together. Yet by making an emphasis, you are able to make and clarify a point. It is in that light that I use the two concepts together. Also, too often we speak of being a member of the Church and not about being a disciple. Here again, for me, one assumes the other. I am a member of the church because I seek to be a disciple of Jesus.

Who is a disciple? I am not speaking only about the twelve people who followed Jesus. A disciple is one who follows someone who they accept as teacher. The disciple learns from the words, actions, and attitude of the teacher, and puts what has been learned into practice in their own life. There is an intentionality in this process. It is not passive. The disciple intentionally learns and follows the teaching of the one they follow. You may note that the word disciple is a few letters short of the

word “discipline.” Here discipline is not about correcting someone, but about intentionality and order. Some would say that the disciple is a disciplined student.

As disciples of Jesus we are called to continue the work of Jesus and to continue to proclaim the wonder and the expansive and extravagant love of God. To proclaim means in both speech and action. To be anti-racist is to intentionally oppose racism. Racism is seen in our society when we judge others simply because of the colour of their skin and the physical features that they bear. Racism is sinful because it denies the image of God in others and that all of us are created in that image.

It has been said that in our world we have become too focused on a “doctrine of destination.” We are focused on end results. While this is important for some things, not everything is a task to be completed. Some things, especially things dealing with relationships, will have no end point. They are a continuous process that we must continue to do, correcting mistakes and seeking to improve each

As disciples of Jesus we continue the work of Jesus, and in our lives we seek to enable this world to a place of righteous living. Righteousness is not about being saintly. Righteousness is about having right relationships. How can we have right relationships with others if we do not affirm the image of God in them and if we do not seek to love each other even as God has loved us?

day. Discipleship and anti-racism are similar. That is why we seek to become anti-racist disciples. These are not things that we can check off our list and say, “I have achieved and done that—now on to the next task!”

Sadly, the history of the church reveals that we have been complicit in some things that have been racist. The experiences of some have revealed that church members have sometimes displayed openly racist actions and words.

It is for this reason that we need to remind ourselves of who we are; we are disciples of Jesus and discipleship calls upon us to be anti-racist. To do this we need to constantly reflect on our words, actions, and attitudes. Do my behaviour, my words, and my attitudes indicate what I have learned from and about Jesus? If we realize that we have not been living up to our calling as disciples, there is no need to feel that we have failed Jesus. Instead, it is an opportunity to acknowledge our mistake, to correct ourselves, and to seek reconciliation as we start over.

We are all called to be anti-racist disciples!



## Faith Reflection

The writer of the letter to the Ephesians, which speaks about certain types of conduct and behaviour, says that these things “must not even be mentioned among you.” (Ephesians 5:3b) While the writer does not mention racism in his list, it is interesting to note that there is

an expectation about behaviour placed on the members of the church. What is also interesting is that the writer seems to be saying that because it may be acceptable behaviour among some, we in the church must seek to “live in love, as Christ has loved us.”

*Lord, let me love as you love. Let me seek to affirm the dignity of all persons. Let me live acknowledging that all persons are made in your image. Let me in my living seek to intentionally seek the overall well being of all persons, each day and every day.*

*Amen.*



## Children's Activity

Maya Douglas

**Story:** “Hagar Hears God’s Promise”

**Materials:** [The Family Story Bible](#)

**Objective:**

- To explore an origin story.
- To demonstrate the power of distance from a focus.
- To reflect on privilege, race, and racism.

**Instructions:**

1. Devices, such as phones or tablets, are allowed and encouraged.
2. Ask for a set of three to five agreements on how to be together. For example: “We will take turns to speak...”, “We will listen with our hearts and minds...”

3. Go outside in pairs (if possible) and find a spot to begin, like a tree on your street. Go over the activity.
4. You are to move away from the spot, and turn and look for your beginning spot at different stages. Each time you stop and look, you may take a photo. Each pair is to move in a different direction.
  - move 10 meters, stop, and look
  - move 10 more meters, stop, and look
  - move 30 more meters, stop, and look
5. Return to the starting spot and either speak there, if all are comfortable, or gather inside.

6. Review the three to five agreements on how to be together.
7. Have someone volunteer to read the Bible story.
8. Have everyone respond in turn to the story. Allow time at the end for those who did not share to respond if they want.

**Reflection Questions:**

- What is one new thing you learned or never thought of?
- How did your starting spot look at each stage as you moved away? Did it change? What changed?
- How did the relationships in our Bible story change? What or who influenced these relationships?

- Have you ever had to distance yourself from a negative person or situation? How do you know if it's better to leave or speak up?
- How does this make you feel and why?

**Love's Words:**

Share genuine words of acceptance and encouragement, such as, "I liked it when..." and "I admired your honesty about..."



## Group Commitment

Have you ever seen or heard about someone being treated differently because of their race? What did you do?

Think about that experience. What do you think Jesus would have done? How could you have shown love and concern in that situation?

You may not be able to do something on your own at that time, but how can you involve others to make a difference for others in the future?



## Advocacy

1. How can your community of faith ensure that everyone who comes to worship is made to feel an affirmation of the image of God within them? What are you already doing? What may need to be done?

2. Ask your minister or another church leader to consider doing a series of studies that focus on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus today.

3. Have there been examples of racism in your community? Consider writing a letter to the editor of your newspaper asking that we treat all persons with respect.



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