Join the Movement

All-Church Read

***How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi***

COP Discussion Guide

Chapters 12-18

# Chapter 12: Class

*“When we say poor people are lazy, we are expressing an elitist idea. When we say Black people are lazy, we are expressing a racist idea. When we say Black poor people are lazier than poor Whites, White elites, and Black elites, we are speaking at the intersection of elitist and racist ideas – an ideological intersection that forms class racism” (152).*

Scripture: Luke 14:7-24

Discussion Questions

* A key practice of antiracism that Kendi identifies at the intersection of class and race is rooting the circumstances of poverty and economic disparities in political and economic conditions and policies, rather than people (153). What would this practice entail for you? How would you need to think and act differently? What spiritual resources do you have to support you?
* Explore Kendi’s discussion of the “dark ghetto” (153-156). What biases do you hold at the intersections of race and class? Where did you learn them?
* Kendi connects racism and capitalism all the way back from slavery to the present. What kind of alternative economics is Jesus suggesting in his parable of the Great Dinner in Luke 14? What would it look like for your faith community to imagine an antiracist future beyond capitalism?

Prayer

Table-setting and Table-turning God,

may we recognize every table we gather around as an invitation: to imagine the world differently.

to enflesh the world otherwise.

to say ‘yes’ to new possibilities to live tenderly,

to think expansively, to do daily life with ferocious love so that life can live and breath can breathe.

Embolden us for this holy labor of living and loving otherwise, for the sake of collective survival and also, always, joy.

- Adapted from Anna Blaedel and M Jade Kaiser, [enfleshed](https://enfleshed.com/)

# Chapter 13: Space

*“The point is that when we unchain ourselves from the space racism that deracializes and normalizes and elevates elite White spaces, while doing the opposite to Black spaces, we will find good and bad, violence and nonviolence, in all spaces, no matter how poor or rich, Black or non-Black” (169).*

Scripture: Psalm 84

Discussion Questions

* Kendi argues that policies of space racism overresource White spaces and underresource non-White spaces (168-172). How do you see this happening in your own neighborhoods, towns, cities?
* What are the distinctions Kendi makes between segregation and separation (174-175)? Why is this distinction important? Does it change or challenge how you feel about spaces set aside for non-White people only?
* What were your perceptions about integration before you read this chapter? How do Kendi’s nuanced critiques of integration change your perception (177-180)? What would it look like for your community to embody Kendi’s antiracist strategy that “fuses desegregation with a form of integration and racial solidarity (180) in order to create a dwelling place, a home for all people?

Prayer

When the Sacred surprises me like an unexpected guest, may I not hesitate to greet Them with open arms.

Let not my bias be a barrier, to embracing the Holy’s mysterious ways. May I be hospitable to God enfleshed in even the dullest circumstances, and the hardest situations,

and the strangest of places.

I am a home, a dwelling place, an open door for encountering Love,

for meeting with Justice, for being held by Awe. May it be so. Amen.

- M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed

# Chapter 14: Gender

*“To be antiracist is to reject not only the hierarchy of races but of race-genders. To be feminist is to reject not only the hierarchy of genders but of race-genders. To truly be antiracist is to be feminist. To truly be feminist is to be antiracist. To be antiracist (and feminist) is to level the different race-genders, is to root the inequities between race-genders in the policies of gender racism” (189).*

Scripture: Genesis 21:1-21

Discussion Questions

* What vision of racial justice and practices of antiracism have black feminists cast for humanity (see Kendi’s discussion of the Combahee River Collective p. 187 and Kimberlé Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality p. 188, 191)?
* Kendi identifies several stereotypical identities at the intersection of race and gender (the unvirtuous hypersexual Black Woman, the virtuous asexual White woman, the hyberdangerous Black man, the innocent and vulnerable White woman, etc). How does gender racism create these tropes and stereotypes? Where do you see the impact/consequences of these stereotypes?
* Reread the story of Sarah and Hagar through a black feminist intersectional lens. What comes into view? What would a practice of gender antiracism look like for Sarah? Abraham? Hagar?

Prayer

Spirit of Truth,

all that has shaped me –

my experiences of joy and pain, both are held in your embrace with care.

I take comfort that you know what is in my heart.

You meet me in my intentions, and nurture what is good. You take delight in my desire to be generous and kind.

But where there is love-within,

striving to become an outward expression, and still doing harm nonetheless,

come with your gentle correction.

At each day’s end, may I rest in the knowledge

that I am loved, I am valuable,

and my persistence in showing-up to the needs of the world

with humility, courage, and conviction will be made fruitful in you. Amen.

– M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed

# Chapter 15: Sexuality

*“Queer antiracism is equating all the race-sexualities, striving to eliminate the inequities between the race sexualities. We cannot be antiracist if we are homophobic or transphobic” (197).*

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-9 Discussion Questions

* Throughout the chapter, Kendi identifies several people and relationships

that encouraged his growth in practicing queer antiracism. What people and relationships have shaped your growth in practicing antiracism and/or queer antiracism?

* On page 197, names his own intersectional identity (a cisgendered Black heterosexual male) and discusses what it means for him to be queer antiracist. How would you name your own intersectional identity and what does that mean about how you embody queer antiracism?
* In Isaiah 11, we encounter the prophet’s vision of the world that will emerge when God’s promises are fulfilled and the people follow God’s ways, a vision we sometimes call “the peaceable kingdom.” What do you imagine a “queer antiracist kindom” will look like? What’s your vision of the queer antiracist world that is emerging when we move toward racial justice?

Prayer

God of fresh starts, of new beginnings,

of renewal and restoration, We awake to your grace,

embraced by love unconditional. With each morning

You birth new possibilities in us; around us. We are surrounded by Sacred potential.

There are so many ways to love.

May we rise to the day’s call

To listen for the aches

To give voice to the beauty To be a companion to justice.

- M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed

# Chapter 16: Failure

*“To understand why racism lives is to understand the history of antiracist failure... Incorrect conceptions of race as a social construct (as opposed to a power construct), of racial history as a singular march of racial progress (as opposed to a duel of antiracist and racist progress), of the race problem as rooted in ignorance and hate (as opposed to powerful self-interest) – all come together to produce solutions bound to fail” (201-202).*

Scripture: Luke 13:10-17 Discussion Questions

* Kendi argues that antiracist activism should first be rooted in power and policy

change, rather than moral and mental change (205-209). How does Kendi support his argument? How would your work for racial justice need to change if you take Kendi’s point seriously?

* “What if instead of a feelings advocacy we had an outcome advocacy that put equitable outcomes before our guilt and anguish?” Kendi asks (210). What would such an outcome advocacy look like in your community?
* Self-critique and assessment are essential parts of the practice of antiracism for Kendi, including what he calls “the antiracist power within”, that is the ability to view my own racism in the mirror of my past and present, view my own antiracism in the mirror of my future (214-215). As you near the end of the book, undertake your own self-critique and assessment, either individually or as a community. What are you discovering?

Prayer

Breathe in your inherent belovedness. Breathe out the lure of toxic cycles.

Breathe in love that makes your heart soft. Breathe out any anger that is being misdirected.

Breathe in acceptance that all cannot be immediately solved. Breathe out the need to control.

Breathe in the wisdom of ancestors who labored for collective love and justice. Breathe out the temptation towards the superficial.

Breathe in a breath of humility. Breathe out all that makes you shrink.

And then remember the trees.

Their giving and receiving of breath. See them holding so much for us.

Offer a confession. And a prayer of gratitude. And let your roots sink deep into the soil of God.

- Adapted from M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed

# Chapter 17: Success

*“Neither failure nor success is written. The story of our generation will be based on what we are willing to do. Are we willing to endure the grueling fight against racist power and policy? Are we willing to transform the antiracist power we gather within us to antiracist power in our society? (218).*

Scripture: Revelation 21:1-7 and/or 22:1-7 Discussion Questions

* What is Kendi’s critique of the concepts of covert and institutional racism (220-

222) and why is it important?

* “Racism has always been terminal and curable. Racism has always been recognizable and mortal,” Kendi says (223). Do you believe that white supremacy will end? Are you convinced that racism can be defeated? Why or why not/
* On page 226, Kendi identifies 8 successive steps to be an antiracist. Where are you on this antiracist journey? Set some goals for where you’d like to be and brainstorm together how you can get there.

Prayer

Spirit of Emergence,

your glory rises from what no longer serves, .

like tender shoots of green grass reach upward through leaves still in decay.

May all who wonder and worry before dreams still slumbering know yours is a trustworthy hope.

Even in the restless seasons of persistent injustice and ever-present grief,

hovering like a winter darkness whose work it seems will never end, remind us that you are the whispered promise,

humble and patient,

of what is carefully held and hidden in the depths waiting for enough sun to reach it,

enough solidarity, enough change

to create the world anew again. Amen.

- Adapted from M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed

# Chapter 18: Survival

*“We can survive metastatic racism…Racist power is not godly. Racist policies are not indestructible. Racial inequities are not inevitable. Racist ideas are not natural to the human mind” (237-238).*

Scripture: I Corinthians 12:14-31 Discussion Questions

* Why is it important to understand that racist policies lead to racist ideas from

Kendi’s perspective (230)? Does that realization change your practices of antiracism?

* “The source of racist ideas was not ignorance and hate, but self-interest,” Kendi argues (230). How does your Christian faith offer you alternatives to this kind of self-interest at the expense of others?
* Kendi claims that the heartbeat of racism is denial and the heartbeat of antiracism is confession (235). What role is confession playing your spiritual practices of antiracism?

Prayer

Each time we grasp the hand of another,

you are there, Loving God, in the flesh entangled. In our hands holding hands show us:

a prayer too rare a site of the holy

where the reaching out and the receiving, the grasping and being grasped,

the need to be held and the needing to hold, all get perfectly mixed up.

Make this hand-holding prayer

a returning to that which is always true

but so rarely spoken to in the language of flesh. We need each other to survive.

We need each other. Amen.

- Adapted from M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed