

# THE *Third* OPTION

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## **Study Guide**

# THE *Third* OPTION

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# Session 1:

## Framing the Problem

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**PRE-READING:** Introduction & Chapters 1-2

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.



### VIDEO TEACHING

Visit [lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option](http://lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option) and watch the teaching video for this session.

**BIBLE READING:** "The Lord's Commander Confronts Joshua"

**Read aloud:** Joshua 5:13-14

*When Joshua was near the town of Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and demanded, "Are you friend or foe?"*

*"Neither one," he replied. "I am the commander of the LORD's army."*

*At this, Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. "I am at your command," Joshua said. "What do you want your servant to do?"*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read and discuss these questions with your group. It is not necessary to get through all the questions. Instead, share your thoughts on any of the questions and let the Spirit guide your conversation.

#### Introduction:

1. How did you come to faith in Jesus? Who first shared with you the Good News? Who has played a significant role in teaching you about the faith throughout your life?
2. Have you ever experienced racism or know someone who has? What was that like? Do you ever feel yourself getting angry or defensive when you think or talk about race? If so, how can we discuss race without harming relationships?
3. How is God's Third Option different than what the world offers? What would happen if more people followed this way in our world? How can you be open to change throughout this study? What is needed for transformation?

**Chapter 1:**

- 1. Do you know your heritage? Have you ever done a DNA test to learn more about it? If so, what did you learn? If you discovered that a measurable portion of your genetic makeup was of a race different from the one you identify with, would that change how you viewed others?
- 2. Instead of ignoring differences, what can we do to value others and the way God has created us all different? What does it mean to honor someone? What is your ethnicity? What characteristics make you unique? Have you ever had someone acknowledge and appreciate those things in you? What is that like?

**Chapter 2:**

- 1. How can racism be a sin of omission and commission? Why does that matter? How does that change how we approach the issue? Were you familiar with the three types of racism discussed on pages 16-18? How do you see those three at play in our world?
- 2. What are your in-groups? What are your out-groups? How do we give preference to members of our in-group? Reread the 18 statements on pages 23-24. Do any of those sound familiar? Have you felt any of those things before? Why do you think that is? How can we intentionally apply our in-group bias to those in our out-group? What is the result of doing this?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.

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# Session 2:

Me

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 3-5

## OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.



## VIDEO TEACHING

Visit [lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option](http://lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option) and watch the teaching video for this session.

**BIBLE READING:** "The Account of Creation"

**Read aloud:** Genesis 1:26-27

*Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."*

*So God created human beings in his own image.*

*In the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read and discuss these questions with your group. It is not necessary to get through all the questions. Instead, share your thoughts on any of the questions and let the Spirit guide your conversation.

### Chapter 3:

1. What are the characteristics that God created in all of us? How do we honor those in others and in ourselves? What is our greatest need in life? Where do we get that? Where do you experience it? How do we recognize the image of God in all human beings?
2. What blessings come with the image of God? What are the responsibilities? Fill in the six blanks on page 39. What is the lie you believe? What is the truth God has for you? What happens when we miss the image of God in ourselves? How can you better recognize the image of God in yourself?

### Chapter 4:

1. Have you ever wondered, "Why can't we all just get along?" Are you willing to do whatever it takes to get along with others? Are you willing to do whatever it takes to love and honor your neighbors equally – regardless of the ethnicity? What do we often hold on to more than Jesus'?

perception and purpose for your life? Have you ever considered the possibility that you may be clinging to your ethnicity?

2. When was the first time you became aware of your ethnicity? What were you told by your family about people of other ethnic groups? How does it make you feel to share these answers with your group? How did their answers affect you? Do you have more biases in your heart than you thought? How do these feelings and perceptions line up with your God-given responsibility to honor his image in others?
3. What is the "Honor Shift?" Is it time for a shift in your heart? How does your social narrative affect your ability to play the role that only you can play in the mosaic of life? What did God put you on this earth to do, at this very moment in time, looking just like you do, with the experiences you've had?

### **Chapter 5:**

1. What is a "blind spot?" Do you believe you have some? How could you go about finding your blind spots? Why is it important to know our blind spots?
2. Have you ever felt defensive when someone pointed out a blind spot to you? Why? What can our response tell us?
3. Why is our "espoused theory" sometimes different from our "theory in use"? How do we develop an unconscious perception of people of another race? How can we go about changing those negative perceptions? What was your reaction to the statistics on crime reported in the media on page 65?
4. Do you know what your blind spots are? Ask yourself, "Is there something I'm not seeing about myself or my perception of others that's racially offensive?" What is God trying to show you?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.

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# Session 3:

## Me (cont'd)

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 6-8

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.



### VIDEO TEACHING

Visit [lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option](http://lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option) and watch the teaching video for this session.

### BIBLE READING: "Love for Enemies"

**Read aloud:** Matthew 5:43-48

*"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read and discuss these questions with your group. It is not necessary to get through all the questions. Instead, share your thoughts on any of the questions and let the Spirit guide your conversation.

#### Chapter 6:

1. Which one of the nine blind spots stood out the most to you? Is there one you feel God is trying to make you aware of? Were there any that made you feel defensive or offended? What might that reaction say about your blind spots?
2. Can you name a time you have been hurt by someone else's blind spot? Which one? Can you give an example of how one of the nine blind spots applies to your life? Can you come up with a blind spot that was not included in the chapter?

#### Chapter 7:

1. Have you ever had a strong reaction to an incident like the man in the story at the beginning of this chapter? Where do reactions like that come from? Why do they happen?

2. What is an issue that you feel like you need to take a side on? What is the Third Option that God is providing us? What does picking sides do to relationships? Think about the five chairs that Pastor Miles preached about. Have you ever “sat” in those seats before?
3. What is your heart toward people who don’t agree with you? How do you honor their right to be heard? How can you better acknowledge their pain and learn about their perspective?
4. What does unity through mutual honor mean? How can you better understand someone who you disagree with? How can you learn about what they are going through and their perspective?

**Chapter 8:**

1. How is God’s love different than the world’s love? How can we show God’s love to those who don’t look like us? In what ways have you shown and received sacrificial love?
2. Have you listened to your heart lately? How do you talk to yourself? Do you truly love yourself? Why does that matter? Are you overly critical of yourself? Do you doubt yourself? How do those things impact how you love others?
3. In what ways do we sometimes make love conditional? What is the difference between covenantal love and contractual love? Would you rather someone confront you when you need it or lie about how awesome you are? What about when someone confronts or criticizes someone of a different ethnicity?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.

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# Session 4:

## Me (cont'd)

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 9-11

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.



### VIDEO TEACHING

Visit [lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option](http://lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option) and watch the teaching video for this session.

**BIBLE READING:** "Living as Those Made Alive in Christ"

**Read aloud:** Colossians 3:12-14

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read and discuss these questions with your group. It is not necessary to get through all the questions. Instead, share your thoughts on any of the questions and let the Spirit guide your conversation.

#### Chapter 9:

1. When was the last time you said "I'm sorry"? How did you get to that place? What is needed in your heart to apologize? How are we called to respond when someone apologizes to us? Have you ever wanted to reject an apology? Why or why not?
2. Do you carry any unresolved anger or resentment toward someone or a group of people? What does God want you to do about that? How do you recognize unforgiveness? What is forgiveness? How does forgiveness give us freedom?
3. Are you avoiding someone right now? Have you ever felt the desire to avoid someone? Where does that come from? How do we move past unforgiveness toward someone we are avoiding? What does avoidance do in our hearts? How does an offense get worse with time? What do we tend to do in our minds?

4. How is forgiveness honoring to the other person? Do you ever have a desire to pay back in fairness? How does fairness relate to forgiveness? What do we need to do with the idea of fairness?
5. How do you know if you've truly forgiven someone? Is there someone who you claim to have forgiven but still argue with in your head? Do you need to apologize to someone? Do you have someone to forgive?

### **Chapter 10:**

1. Have you ever felt like the "other"? If so, describe that experience. Put yourself in the position of the people asked to do the "field trips." What sort of emotions do you think you'd feel? What thoughts would you have about doing it?
2. Is fear playing a role in your interactions, or lack thereof, with people of a different race? Do you find yourself avoiding conversations about race? Do you get uncomfortable when the subject of race or racism comes up? Have you considered how a sense of unease could prevent you from following through on God's call for your life to honor others? Have you considered how fear has prevented you from seeing life from a different perspective?
3. What does it mean to "face the facts"? How does that help us grow? How can we get educated about the "other"? What does it look like to be accountable to affirm one another? How can you build relationships and recognize the image of God in everyone? According to the author, what destroys fear?

### **Chapter 11:**

1. What sort of reaction do you have when you hear the word "privilege"? What can you learn from that? Have you benefited from privilege in your life? What is "the Privilege of God" that the author speaks about? How can we leverage the privilege we've been given to help others?
2. Do you feel ashamed of your privilege or angry about the privilege of others? What does God want you to feel about that? How can you give those emotions over to God and live free of shame or anger?
3. What is the only way we can truly defeat the racial divide in our world? Do you believe that God is fighting for you and can work out justice for you even when man gets in the way? When you think about privilege in America and the unfairness of racism, how do you respond in your heart toward others and to God? Do you view your advantaged opportunities and achievements as blessings from God or as deserved entitlements? What is grace?
4. How do your blessings and advantages impact your views of yourself in comparison to others? In what ways do you leverage your advantages and earthly blessings to love your neighbor? In what ways could you leverage your life to help someone else? What attitudes in your heart would change first if you were to express the Privilege of God? What type of person would be the easiest or hardest for you to leverage your advantage to help?





# Session 5:

## You

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 12-14

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.



### VIDEO TEACHING

Visit [lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option](http://lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option) and watch the teaching video for this session.

### BIBLE READING: "Love"

**Read aloud:** 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read and discuss these questions with your group. It is not necessary to get through all the questions. Instead, share your thoughts on any of the questions and let the Spirit guide your conversation.

#### Chapter 12:

1. What does open dialogue and quality time do to a relationship that was once tense? How can you incorporate those two things into your life? Have you had experience with a situation like the one discussed in the beginning of the chapter—the “Game Changer” event? How does finding common ground help improve a relationship?
2. Is there anyone or group of people who you have dishonorable assumptions about? Why do you think those exist? Do you struggle with blaming others for issues in your life or our world?
3. Which, if any, of the three dishonorable assumptions do you struggle with the most? How can you turn dishonorable assumptions into honorable ones?
4. Can you name a dishonorable assumption someone has about you and how it made you feel? Can you name a dishonorable assumption you have about someone or a group of people and why you have that assumption about them?

### **Chapter 13:**

1. Did you sense any anxiety in Courtney's answers? Have you ever experienced that sort of stress when you were the "other" in a situation? Have you felt guilty or defensive when reading this book? What might God be trying to teach you in that? What is the author's intent for this book? What would you feel if you were the only person of your race in a place?
2. How do you think the daily stress of being the "other" might affect a person? Have you ever considered that stress before? When you read the section on microaggressions, what sort of emotions did you have? Have you heard that word before? How has it been incorrectly used to offend others? Why is it important to understand microaggressions? How do they affect others? What do they do?
3. What stood out to you about the statistics discussed in the "Pain of Incarceration" section on pages 179-180? Did you feel compassion? Were you quick to blame? What can our reactions tell us about our feelings toward those impacted by incarceration? Can you understand why hurting people are so desperate to experience and receive your honor?
4. Do you ever wonder if people see you as the enemy? What do you think God wants to teach you through the lives and experiences of your brothers and sisters in Christ? Can you identify a form of "glass in your fish tank" that serves as an invisible racial barrier you keep bumping up against? Can you identify a micro-insult that you have a habit of giving or receiving?

### **Chapter 14:**

1. Do you ever catch yourself having a race conversation in your head? Why is it important to have race conversations with others? How can they be a part of the solution? What makes a conversation on race meaningful? Have you ever had a meaningful conversation about race? What made that significant?
2. How can we engage in conversation that's not trying to talk the other person into your point, but instead seek a Third Option together?
3. Which of the seven keys that Pastor Miles talked about resonated with you the most? Why? Which one do you think you need to work on a bit more? How can open lines of communication with others establish trust and understanding? How can you practice having a conversation with someone? What is something you have in common with a friend or family member that you talk to frequently? How can you start to learn what you have in common with someone new?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.

# Session 6:

We

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**PRE-READING:** Chapters 15-18

## OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.



## VIDEO TEACHING

Visit [lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option](http://lutheranchurchofhope.org/the-third-option) and watch the teaching video for this session.

**BIBLE READING:** “Cain and Abel”

**Read aloud:** Genesis 4:2-9

*Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.*

*Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.*

*Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”*

*Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.*

*Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”*

*“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read and discuss these questions with your group. It is not necessary to get through all the questions. Instead, share your thoughts on any of the questions and let the Spirit guide your conversation.

### Chapter 15:

1. Have you ever heard that Sunday mornings are the most segregated time of the week in America? What are your feelings about that? Have you ever thought about why that might be? What will heaven look like? Who will be there? Should our churches reflect the kingdom of heaven?

2. Whose responsibility is it to honor those who don't look like them?  
How can we do that? What are the needs in our community that we could help address? Who could your group serve? What does it mean to "Count. Walk. Ask. Love."? Which one of those resonated with you the most? What can your group do to engage in each of those steps?
3. Do you know the numbers of people hurting in your area? Why is that important to know? How can you learn more about the things your community members need? Who can you ask, "How can I help you?" Who can you ask, "How can I pray for you?" What does love look like in these situations? What does it look like to honor the image of God in another person when they respond to those questions?
4. Is there a community in your city you haven't visited? One that you fear or feel uncomfortable going to? Is there a community that God has called you to help but you've said no? Is there a situation of pain in a certain demographic that you know exists, but you haven't taken the time to research or assess? Have you found yourself hesitating to offer God's love to others because you're afraid of being rejected?

### **Chapter 16:**

1. How are you doing with this book so far? Are you feeling any resentment in your heart? What does unforgiveness give birth to? Have you felt any sense of retaliation, jealousy, anger or bitterness in your heart toward others?
2. What does it mean to be a "keeper"? How do we lovingly hold each other accountable without being judgmental? What's the difference between a watchdog relationship and a shepherding one? How do you remind others of their calling to love their neighbor and challenge them to act accordingly? How can your Hope Group be a place where you act as each other's "keepers"? Do you do that already?
3. If you have children, what is the message you're sending them about who is friendly, important, safe, smart and valuable based on who you spend time around? What message did you learn when you were growing up? Did you spend time around a lot of people who didn't look like you? Did that influence how you view others today? How can we better teach children that all people are of equal value, worth and honor?

### **Chapter 17:**

1. Have you ever noticed if someone does something different from you? What was your reaction to that difference in culture? Have you ever learned something from a person of another culture that you've adopted into your life?
2. Do you feel as though your culture is better than every other culture? Do you believe there is something to learn from other cultures, especially ones we might be biased against? How do we distinguish a good cultural practice from a bad one? Does the way you do things prevent you from learning from



a person of a different culture? Is it possible that you are actually honoring the culture of man over the image of God in others?

3. How can you break the ice with people of different cultures? What are things you have in common? What does your culture value? Money? Family? God? Education? Have you ever played a sport? What sort of culture did that sport have among those who played it? How has that impacted how you live now?
4. How do you demonstrate your commitment to your friends? How do you remind them of your availability to them and their significance to you? When do you feel most loved by your friends and family?

### **Chapter 18:**

1. What does it mean to have a new heart? What does that look like? How can a person receive a new heart?
2. What is the most significant thing you're going to take away from this book? How has it changed how you view race and interact with people who are different than you?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.







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