



Roadmap to Reconciliation

Implementation Guide

by Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil

The content of the Implementation Guide (IGuide) is based from the book, Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice by Brenda Salter McNeil.

The IGuide is written with the intent to be used in conjunction with this book.

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PURPOSE

Because racial reconciliation is such an important and complex journey to walk, this IGuide has been created in response to the following questions, “But how do we do this in our ministry?” and “What does reconciliation around race and other key dividing realities really look and feel like in our community?” This IGuide is meant to help users unpack, walk into, and replicate the testimonies, truths, and calls to action surrounding reconciliation shared in the book. It is always a choice and a costly commitment to engage in the work of reconciliation. Therefore, no book, idea, or even the affirmation of “being for reconciliation” can truly flourish without being acted upon and fought for amidst the many broken realities in our world.

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

This Roadmap to Reconciliation IGuide is deeply rooted in the Christian faith and a biblical call to reconciliation. The following principles are foundational for engaging the IGuide:

- **Invitational:** engaging an ongoing journey for renewal, hope, and healing
- **Incarnational:** embodying reconciliation and creating spaces for transformation
- **Contextual:** driven by God’s calling to realities in your community
- **Humility:** undergirded by an authenticity and earned credibility from others
- **Structural:** changing systemic inequalities and power dynamics for both personal and social restoration
- **Influential:** able to be replicated and sustained in healthy ways

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The IGuide is designed to be used by leaders already committed to the work of racial reconciliation. They are leaders who are ready to go deeper and further with others also on this journey. Ministries of all shapes and sizes can use it: churches, organizations, college campuses, etc. Although it is not mandatory, this process is best implemented in a diverse ministry context. This IGuide is intended for a leadership team to use to engage with their community context in mind.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Selecting a diverse, healthy leadership team to steward this process is a crucial first step in engaging the IGuide. This leadership team should be made up of individuals who represent your context’s demographics as much as possible (i.e. ethnicity, gender, age, economic status, education level, nationality, immigration status, etc.). The LTeam should include representatives from your staff, council, or elder board, and other top leaders in your ministry. This will ensure the LTeam’s ability to engage safely and effectively in this work. It is also recommended, if possible, that you choose two co-leaders from different ethnic backgrounds to lead the LTeam. The co-leaders should be respected, able to organize, and able to advocate for the group. The co-leaders will be tasked with overseeing the Roadmap to Reconciliation process and implementing the IGuide within the LTeam.

HOW TO USE THE IGUIDE

You will likely need to tweak and adapt each IPhase and accompanying activities in the IGuide to fit your context and people. If an activity doesn't fit quite right, change it up. If a certain conversation goes deep and seems especially fruitful, stay with it longer and press in. Remember that we are not seeking "right answers" on this journey. The purpose of the IGuide is to provide an invitation to engage in conversations and activities that encourage your LTeam to see afresh where God is working and then to discover new places of ministry partnerships with others. It is long-haul work, not bite-sized, check-the-box work.

PLANNING YOUR TIMELINE AND COMMITMENT

It will take a commitment of regular engagement with the work of reconciliation to facilitate growth and transformation. The suggested format for engaging the IGuide is below. As you begin to plan, add these meetings, gatherings, and dates to your team and/or community calendar:

- I. Plan a six- to 12-month period to commit to engaging the book and the IGuide.
- II. Create a rhythm of meeting at least once per month for your LTeam to deeply engage the material in each IPhase of the IGuide. One to two hours per month is a suggested time commitment for this meeting. However, know that this period may vary each month depending upon what your LTeam is being asked to engage in. It is highly recommended to meet more often if you're able.
- III. For reconciliation to be implemented throughout the ministry, it is important for your LTeam to inform and educate the members about this initiative during the process. This helps to cast vision and raise awareness about the value and significance of reconciliation to your overall mission. Therefore, senior leaders or the LTeam should plan to give regular updates about the reconciliation journey to the broader ministry so more people are inspired and challenged to get involved. At a minimum, an event or update should occur once per quarter during the six- to 12-month period.
- IV. As individuals, prepare the assigned materials ahead of time, complete the readings, and research sociological examples between meetings to serve your LTeam meeting time well.
- V. Plan how you will share, celebrate, and mark the end of this process publicly with your community. The goal of this time will be sharing what God has done throughout this process as well as communicating next steps.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BUY-IN FROM LEADERSHIP

It is crucial for the senior leader of your ministry to fully support and endorse this initiative. A clear and well-articulated commitment to racial reconciliation and an emphasis on its centrality to the mission of the ministry is important to your success. Even if the senior leader is not actively involved in implementing the IGuide within your ministry, it is crucial that they openly communicate the importance of this work to the broader group.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

As you begin this journey, it is vitally important to understand that reconciliation is ultimately a spiritual process. The battle for racial justice and reconciliation is not just personal, social, or organizational—it is a spiritual battle. That's why we must recognize that we are not able to change hearts, transform communities, or heal our society without the presence and power of God. Without divine intervention, we are destined to stay locked in divisive patterns that we can only analyze but not change in our inadequate, human efforts. Therefore, we need a spirituality of reconciliation that is rooted in prayer to empower us to move beyond the limitations of our human inability.

God is delighted when people come together in prayer to access the power of the Cross to break down dividing walls of hostility. Far too often, those who seek to be reconcilers are anemic in their prayer lives—both individually and corporately. This is a mistake! Racial problems are too immense for this type of spiritual anemia and cynicism. Therefore, we invite you to make a commitment to prayer as the first step in this reconciliation process. We are convinced that nothing of Kingdom value happens without prayer. Prayer must be an essential element of all specific reconciliation strategies. To that end, we urge your posture to be one of kneeling before God with open hands as you seek to hear the Spirit's voice and receive your direction for engaging in this process.

ROADMAP 2.0

As ministries have engaged with the Roadmap to Reconciliation Model, our understanding and application of this process have evolved. As a result, the Roadmap 2.0 is an improved diagram of the one found on pg. 37 in *Roadmap to Reconciliation*. Roadmap 2.0 now reflects the need for people of color to have opportunities for restoration as a part of the reconciliation process. White allies, who have been actively involved in the work of reconciliation for a significant length of time, may also benefit from this Restoration Circle. However, they need to discern if they should engage this process in the context of community with others who affirm their need for rest.

The markers on the Restoration Circle are:

- **Renew:** It is vital for ministries to provide institutional support that allows those who are weary from the ongoing battle of working for reconciliation to have rest and opportunities for self-care, solitude, prayer, and lament. This allows them to be replenished, refilled, and made whole again. An example of this might be to host a sacred time of lament in your ministry after a racial tragedy where people can gather and hold each other in prayer and renew their hope.
- **Recharge:** The physical and emotional toll of living and working in a racialized society is debilitating and exhausting for people of color. Therefore, it is necessary for the intentional creation of life-giving environments that address these needs by providing opportunities to be strengthened, nurtured, and replenished. This may include gathering spaces for people of color to meet regularly with each other or an ethnic-specific retreat for the purpose of being refilled.

- **Reconnect:** For people of color in dominant culture ministries, it is necessary to affirm the need to connect with others from their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This provides a safe space to be understood and to reconnect with God and others in culturally familiar ways. This ability to step away from “the battle” enables people of color to refocus their thoughts and recommit to their purpose and desire to engage in reconciliation. To help facilitate this gathering, a ministry may want to dedicate a specific space where people of color can reconnect with their ethnic identity through artifacts, music, and other resources that are culturally relevant and affirming.

EXPLORING WHITE IDENTITY

As Christians, our deepest sense of identity is in Jesus Christ, but we must also recognize that there is a negative impact on everyone living in a racialized society. For Whites, it’s impossible to fully internalize the concept of “whiteness” as being good. This produces guilt and shame that paralyzes, causing denial, silence, and inactivity. It limits their ability to engage in the work of reconciliation and racial justice. Therefore, it is necessary to take the implications of whiteness more seriously in order to help Whites break free from the distorted sense of identity they have internalized from the narrative of racial difference. This Roadmap to Reconciliation process is designed to create a safe environment that fosters this type of honest reflection while working together to become a racially transformed community.

As White leaders, consider meeting regularly to connect, share resources, learn together, and support one another’s continued growth and awareness so that you can be better advocates for your sisters and brothers of color. If you feel you need some help guiding your time, reading *White Awake* by Daniel Hill, *Being White: Finding Our Place in a Multiethnic World* by Doug Schaupp and Paula Harris, and *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* by Jennifer Harvey can be good starting points.

RECLAIMING AFRICAN NARRATIVES AND IDENTITIES

Part of the impact of a racialized society on African-Americans in the US has been the deconstruction of their historical narrative and identity. For ministries on this reconciliation journey, sponsoring DNA testing can serve as a means for African-American identifying members to connect to their history and heritage and reaffirm their origins in a life-giving way. A wonderful resource for DNA testing is www.africanancestry.com. They are considered a world leader in DNA testing and have built the largest DNA database for people of African descent. What a gift it would be for the church to support African-Americans in the process of restoring and reclaiming their narrative and identity as a part of the reconciliation journey!

A NOTE ON PAIR WORK

When engaging in partner work through the process, it may be important to pair people on your LTeam in same/similar race and/or experiential partners. The hope behind this suggestion is to reduce the potential for any disparity to arise and become disruptive to the group’s process.

SUMMARY: HOW TO ENGAGE THE IGUIDE

- 1. Choose your Leadership Team** and select co-leaders. Determine what preparation is needed and meeting times for the co-leaders to talk through the introductory materials, plans, and process. Have everyone on your LTeam complete the assessments needed to begin the process.
- 2. Provide resources** to everyone on the LTeam. These resources include Roadmap to Reconciliation books, access to the IGuide, and the online portal.
- 3. Plan out your six- to 12-month period** to commit to engaging the material.
- 4. Decide on clear beginning and end points.** Plan for at least six LTeam meetings and two larger community gatherings during this period, which will serve as events to mark the start and completion of the process.
- 5. Ask for prayer** from a variety of sources that will surround this process and your LTeam. Consider who to share with in your ministry and ask for their advocacy.