



five-week Lenten study

RECONCILIATION:
FROM ASHES TO PEACE



FACILITATOR GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to facilitate a session of this year's Lenten study. Your leadership, care and kindness is critical in advancing reconciliation. Use this Guide in conjunction with the Participant Guide.

This study is suitable for individual or group use during Lent. Each week invites reflection, discussion, prayer, and faithful action as we journey from inner transformation toward God's reconciling mission.

Lent is an appropriate time to study reconciliation because the season is intentionally designed to lead believers through honest self-examination, repentance, and restored relationship with God and our neighbors.

Lent commemorates Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness — a time marked by fasting, prayer, and preparation. Repentance means turning around. Reconciliation begins the same way: by acknowledging brokenness and choosing a new direction.

Lent always leads to the cross, where God reconciled humanity to himself through Christ. Studying reconciliation during Lent helps us reflect not only on what Christ did, but how we are called to live in response.

Lent invites us into a time of honest self-examination. With practices such as fasting and prayer, we create space to notice unresolved conflict, pride, resentment, or hardened hearts. Once we identify these barriers, we can move toward reconciliation and Easter.

This facilitator-only guide supports leaders guiding a five-week Lenten journey on reconciliation. It integrates trauma-informed principles to ensure safety, dignity, and choice for all participants.

TRAUMA-INFORMED FACILITATION NOTES (READ FIRST)

Many participants may carry experiences of trauma, abuse, betrayal, or deep relational harm. A trauma-informed approach prioritizes safety, choice, and empowerment while honoring spiritual formation.

Core Principles for This Study

- Safety: Emotional and spiritual safety are more important than disclosure or resolution.
- Choice: Participation, sharing, and action steps are always optional.
- Trustworthiness: Be clear about boundaries, confidentiality, and expectations.
- Empowerment: Emphasize agency—participants decide what reconciliation looks like for them.
- Grace-paced growth: God's work unfolds over time; urgency can re-traumatize.

Language to Use Consistently

- “You are not required to share.”
- “Forgiveness does not mean reconciliation or restored access.”
- “Safety is part of God’s care.”
- “God does not rush healing.”

Language to Avoid

- Statements that pressure forgiveness or reconciliation
- Implying spiritual failure due to unresolved relationships
- Minimizing harm or suffering
- Encouraging confrontation without discernment

Again, thank you for your faithfulness to this process. If participants feel safer, more grounded, and more hopeful—regardless of outcomes—then this study has been successful. Reconciliation honors truth, dignity, and God’s pace.

[Please share your feedback after your session by calling/texting Anita Ford at 703.795.1840]

week 1

PREPARING THE HEART (JAMES 1:19)

FACILITATOR EMPHASIS

- Reconciliation begins internally
- Listening as spiritual discipline

WATCH FOR

- Over-disclosure
- Defensive explanations

TRAUMA-INFORMED NOTES

- Silence may be protective, not disengaged
- Anger may signal unresolved pain

GENTLE REDIRECTS

“Let’s stay focused on posture”

“Sharing is always optional”

SESSION GOAL

Participants understand reconciliation begins with heart posture.

week 2

THE CALL TO MAKE PEACE (MATTHEW 5:9)

FACILITATOR EMPHASIS

- Peacemaking as calling
- Peace is not avoidance

WATCH FOR

- Pressure to act quickly
- Shame around avoidance

TRAUMA-INFORMED NOTES

- Avoidance may have been a survival strategy
- Timing matters

GENTLE REDIRECTS

“Peacemaking does not mean rushing”

“God honors discernment”

SESSION GOAL

Participants view peacemaking as identity, not obligation.

week 3

PRACTICING FORGIVENESS (EPHESIANS 4:32)

FACILITATOR EMPHASIS

- Forgiveness flows from grace
- Forgiveness does not equal access

WATCH FOR

- Painful disclosures
- Self-blame

TRAUMA-INFORMED NOTES

- Forgiveness is a process
- Boundaries can be holy

GENTLE REDIRECTS

“Forgiveness does not deny harm”

“God’s grace is patient”

SESSION GOAL

Participants understand forgiveness without coercion.

week 4

BECOMING NEW (2 CORINTHIANS 5:17)

FACILITATOR EMPHASIS

- New creation is forward-looking
- Identity reshaped

WATCH FOR

- Grief responses
- Fear of hope

TRAUMA-INFORMED NOTES

- Grief can coexist with newness
- Hope may feel unsafe

GENTLE REDIRECTS

“New does not erase the past”

“God works gently”

SESSION GOAL

Participants hold hope without minimizing loss.

week 5

LIVING THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION (2 CORINTHIANS 5:18)

FACILITATOR EMPHASIS

- Reconciliation as participation
- Mission without burden

WATCH FOR

- Overwhelm
- Performance mindset

TRAUMA-INFORMED NOTES

- Small steps can reduce feeling overwhelmed
- God carries the outcome

GENTLE REDIRECTS

“We join God’s work”

“Faithfulness is enough”

SESSION GOAL

Participants see reconciliation as a sustainable calling.