



**R A D I C A L
G R A C E**

Social Justice Discussion Guide

RADICAL GRACE



How to use this guide

Please feel free to customize the activities, adding time or removing elements to suit your group's needs. We recommend that whatever discussion style you choose that you begin with the Safe Space creation activity. If you want to do all elements of the guide, allocate around 75 min. (in addition to the film screening).

Structure and Time

Introduction (5 min)

Introduce group leader(s) and welcome participants

Watch Film (80 min)

Safe Space creation (5 min)

Meditation (10 min)

Reflection in Small Groups (10 min)

Discussion (20 min)

Inspired Action (20 min)

Light reflection (10 min)

Who this guide is for:

This guide was made for individuals and groups who are inspired by the call to foster social justice in your communities.

The purpose of the guide is to stimulate reflection and discussion, encouraging participants to take action from a place of depth and authenticity.

Materials Needed

For the Discussion Leader:

Pen or Pencil

Paper

A large piece of paper and marker or access to a white/blackboard

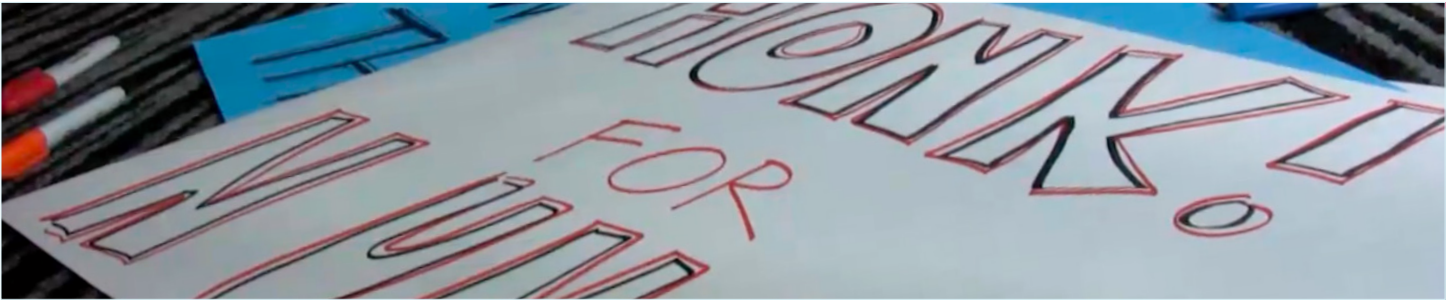
A watch to keep time

For Participants:

Pen or Pencils for each person

Paper (one sheet or two for each person)

Watch the film



A message from the director

I'm not Catholic, or even Christian ... or even a person of faith. But I have found that my most "spiritual" experiences have been when I was serving others or acting for social justice. It is through this work that that we can experience our oneness with all other beings. So I wondered, what does it look like to approach social justice work as a spiritual practice?

Broadly, U.S. Catholic nuns have developed a spirituality that is deeply grounded in social justice. Their faith is one of inclusion, interconnection and equality. They walk with the marginalized and are willing to challenge oppression, even in their own Church. I have learned so much from them and I'm so excited to share their story with you!

Rebecca Parrish, Director, Radical Grace



Meditation and reflection

🕒 10 Minutes

After watching the film, lead the whole group in a short meditation. This will help the participants remember what parts of the film struck them the most. It is important that the group leader keep track of time during this exercise.

If you've led a meditation exercise before, feel free to begin it however you wish, bringing in the reflection questions below. If you haven't led one before, simply follow the steps below and read each one aloud. Just remember to take the allotted time for each section. Make sure you leave time for people to ponder each question.

Meditation to Read Aloud (5 min.)

🕒 5 Minutes

1. Please settle yourself comfortably in your seat. If possible, put both feet on the ground, and your hands in your lap or on your legs. You can meditate with your eyes open or closed, whichever you are most comfortable with. (The leader should pause for 15-30 seconds while everyone gets settled. When the room is quiet, move on to the next question.)
2. Now focus on your breath. Pay attention to your in breath and your out breath. (Pause for 5 seconds) Feel as your lungs empty and fill completely, allowing your abdomen to expand rather than your upper chest. (Pause for 5 seconds). As you breathe, feel the air bring energy to your whole body, from your toes to the top of your head. (Have them practice this quiet breathing for about a minute. When the room seems calm, move on to the next question)
3. Now bring to mind a moment from the film that particularly struck you. (Pause for 10 secs.) Who was in the scene? (Pause for 10 secs.) What was said? (Pause for 10 secs.) Does it remind you of an experience in your own life? (Pause for 10 secs.) While you remember, pay attention to the feelings that come up. (Pause for 1 min. of reflection)
4. Next, reflect on the term "social justice." What do you think of when you hear the term? (Pause for 15 secs.) How does it relate to your experience of the Catholic community? Have you experienced acts of social justice within the Catholic community or another community? (Pause for 15 secs.)
5. I would like you to recall a scene from the film that either challenged or reinforced your understanding of social justice. (Pause for 10 secs.) Who was in the scene? What was said? (Pause for 10 secs.) Does it remind you of something that has occurred in your own life? (Pause for 10 secs.) Again, while you remember, pay attention to the feelings that come up. (Pause for 1 min. of reflection.)
6. As we end this meditation, slowly become more aware of your surroundings. (Pause for 5 secs.) Also become more aware of your body. Gently wiggle your toes and fingers. (Pause for 3 secs.) When you are ready, open your eyes.

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Safe Space Creation

🕒 5 Minutes

Radical Grace touches on a variety of issues people may have strong and differing feelings about. **To have a meaningful and deep discussion, it is important to create a safe space where everyone feels comfortable expressing their feelings and opinions.** Before the discussion begins, the group should come up with a series of agreements to help make a safe space. Write the group's ideas on the big sheet of paper or the white board so they can be referenced throughout the discussion. Here are some we recommend:

Avoid value judgments of other people's experiences and opinions.

Example: "Your opinion is wrong" or "That's a crazy thing to do."

Instead, hear another person out and express your feelings and opinions without judging what someone else has said.

Use "I" statements to avoid speaking for other people.

Example: "You must have been thinking or feeling this way." Instead say, "What you said reminds me of an experience I had. This is how I felt."

Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak.

Individuals should monitor themselves during the discussion, asking if they hear themselves speaking more than others in the group.

Remind participants that silence is not a bad thing and sometimes people need time before sharing their thoughts.

As discussion leader, help create space for people who may not be participating actively. If someone is speaking too frequently, you can open space by saying, "Thanks for that point, Name. Let's see if other people have things they'd like to share."

Ensuring confidentiality is important, especially when an individual shares a personal experience. Make sure that if a person asks you not to speak about something outside of the group, you do not.



Reflection in Small Groups

🕒 10 Minutes

Divide into small groups. We recommend doing in small groups of 3-4 people. This fosters greater intimacy and trust amongst participants.

Reflection:

After everyone has divided into small groups, have everyone in the group share what came up for them in the meditation. You can ask, “What moments from the film stood out for you? Why?”

Breaking into Small Groups:

As the leader, you can have people choose their own groups or divide them yourself. If you meet frequently, we suggest that the group leader divide the group so people can get exposed to new opinions and ideas.

How to divide a large group by counting off:

Decide if you want groups of 3 or 4 people.

Divide the number in your large group by the number of the number of people you want in the small groups.

- This is the number you need to count off by.
- For example, if you have 40 participants and would like no more than 4 people in a group, then ask the group to count off by 10.
- Have participants join with others who said the same number.

R A D I C A L G R A C E

Discussion: Words of inspiration

 20 Minutes

We have created discussion questions based on important quotes that each sister offered during the film, each addressing different themes. You can pick a theme to focus on or allow each small group to pick the one they are most interested in. Many of the topics and questions are interrelated, so feel free to mix and match elements if you are inspired.

Each discussion section has between 2-3 questions. You can either write the questions on the large piece of paper /whiteboard or copy the following pages and provide relevant sections to each group.

Sister Jean - Unconditional Love

Reflect on the quote from Sister Jean below briefly before moving on to the questions:

“My goal is to try to love people as unconditionally as I can, so that they have that experience at least once in their life. I think that that’s a sacred duty.”

1. How have you experienced unconditional love in your life?
2. What prevents love from flowing freely in our communities?
3. How can we learn to cultivate unconditional love in our families, workplaces and in our communities?
4. In the film, Jean talks about how people’s lives have ripple effects on others, even after they die. How do you understand the ripple effect unconditional love has on others?

DISCUSSION NOTES:

Sister Chris - Self Acceptance

Reflect on the quote from Sister Chris below briefly before moving on to the questions:

“For me, things started to happen internally, in terms of some of my own personal healing, being able to love myself as a woman.”

1. What barriers have existed in your life that have hindered self-love and acceptance? Are they barriers that affect other individuals in your community?
2. What was a transformative moment in your life that allowed for self-acceptance?
3. How has your relationship with yourself affected your relationship to the communities you belong to? Have you found spaces where you feel radically accepted?

DISCUSSION NOTES:

Inspired Action: Feeding Hunger with Love

Reverend Dr. Cornel West has said: *“Justice is what love looks like in public.”*

Each sister in Radical Grace found ways of demonstrating love by addressing needs in her community. Is there an issue in your community that you’d like to address? Brainstorm an action that your community can engage in. Or, if you are already active in your community, brainstorm ways that you can be more present to your social justice work.

Exchange information with your group members and schedule a date right now to future date to check in with each other on your progress.

DISCUSSION NOTES:

RADICAL GRACE



Light Reflection Closing

🕒 10 Minutes

Gather back as a single group and return to your meditation position. When you are settled, read the quote from Sister Chris below and reflection questions with the group:

Reflecting on her community organizing work, Sister Chris says *“I think we are emerging from a long dark night... We have been carrying a light on behalf of a God, who is inclusive, who loves, who welcomes...”* (Pause for 5 sec)

Whether or not you have theistic beliefs, light is an important symbol of hope and renewal for many. How has the film helped shine light on struggles you are facing in your own life or in your community? (Pause for 10 sec) Where is your light guiding you? (Pause for 5 sec) Who is it asking you to help?

After reading these questions, have individuals share their thoughts with the rest of the group.

REFLECTION NOTES:
