



A Self-Paced Study Guide for  
the Presbytery of East Iowa

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*Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world.*

*And ready to fight for it."*

*- Arundati Roy*

## **WEEK SIX - Theme for the Week**

Foundations and Faith

### **Readings from *Caste***

The Foundations of Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents

Pillar One: Divine Will and the Laws of Nature

Pillar Two: Heritability

### **Scripture**

There is no one biblical word for race, which would denote a separation of human groups into distinctive entities on the basis of different physical features: the characteristic phrases, in Greek, *to genos tōn anthropōn*, or, in Latin, *humanum genus*, sum up the reality: 'race' means those descended from one common stock, and the only large-scale application of the term is to humankind as a whole.

The rest of the world was divided into peoples and nations. The 'people of the land' (*ām hā āres*) in the earliest period were a body of free men, enjoying civic rights in a given territory. The phrase was still used in this general sense at the time of the return from exile (Hg. 2:4; Zc. 7:5; Dn. 9:6). In Ezra and Nehemiah, however, it denotes non-Jewish people, those who are antagonistic to Israel and with whom marriage is forbidden. The Jews, returning from Babylon, were no longer the 'people of the land', enjoying the same political status accorded to Samaritans, Ammonites and Moabites.

Sin is manifest most clearly in the refusal to love and serve God (Rom. 1:21–25). The consequence is anarchy in interpersonal relationships (Rom. 1:26–31). No-one is exempt: 'all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin' (Rom. 3:9). The effect of sin is subtle; never more so than when human beings believe they are free of its presence in particular instances. Racist attitudes and practices are often the result of a failure to discern how sin has

caused a total distortion of our approach to life. Because we have a false view of God, we also have a false view of his creatures. The making of 'graven images' (Ex. 20:4—today mental pictures rather than literal idols) has produced as its result the manipulation and exploitation of man and woman, the image of God. **[Andrew Kirk, *Themelios*, Vol.10, Issue 2]**

### **Galatians 3:28**

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female-- for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

### **Genesis 1:27**

So God created humans in his own image, in the image of God he created them. . . .

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Discuss how overt racism subtly transforms into unconscious bias. How do you see the consequences of this transformation being present in current American culture?
2. In the book thus far, Wilkerson have provided examples that range from the horrifying (lynching) to the absurd (the Indian woman who walked across an office to ask a Dalit to pour her water from the jug next to her desk) to illustrate caste's influence on behavior. Why do we need to see this range to clearly understand how caste and race work? How do we use scripture to authorize perspectives on caste?

### **Action Steps**

Who are you reading, listening to, watching, in relationship with? Do an inventory for the next week or do one of the past week. What does that say about the voices that are in your head and informing your worldview? The challenge for this week is to intentionally seek out new voices to listen to, new perspectives to seek to understand. Do not shy away from being pushed out of your comfort zone. God calls us to grow.

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