

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

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>THEME</b>	<b>READING</b>
<b>WEEK ONE</b> Week of July 4	<b>THEME: Surfaces and Depths</b>	<b>PART ONE: TOXINS IN THE PERMAFROST AND HEAT RISING ALL AROUND</b> Ch. 1 – The Afterlife of Pathogens Ch. 2 – An Old House and an Infrared Light
<b>WEEK TWO</b> Week of July 11	<b>THEME: Untouchable – The Divine and the Corrupt</b>	Ch. 3 – An American Untouchable
<b>WEEK THREE</b> Week of July 18	<b>THEME: Containers</b>	<b>PART TWO: THE ARBITRARY CONSTRUCTION OF HUMAN DIVISIONS</b> Ch. 4 – A Long-Running Play and the Emergence of Caste in America Ch. 5 – The Container We Have Built for You
<b>WEEK FOUR</b> Week of July 25	<b>THEME: Measuring Fog</b>	Ch. 6 – The Measure of Humanity Ch. 7 – Through the Fog of Delhi to the Parallels in India and America
<b>WEEK FIVE</b> Week of August 1	<b>THEME: Silent Witness</b>	Ch. 8 – The Nazis and the Acceleration of Caste Ch. 9 – The Evil of Silence
<b>WEEK SIX</b> Week of August 8	<b>THEME: Foundations and Faith</b>	<b>PART THREE: THE EIGHT PILLARS OF CASTE</b> Pillar 1: Divine Will and the Laws of Nature Pillar 2: Heritability
<b>WEEK SEVEN</b> Week of August 15	<b>THEME: As Pure and Chaste as Falling Snow</b>	Pillar 3: Endogamy and the Control of Marriage and Mating Pillar 4: Purity versus Pollution

<b>WEEK EIGHT</b> Week of August 22	<b>THEME: Social Tetris: Building a Tower of Power</b>	<b>Pillar 5: Occupational Hierarchy – The Jatis and the Mudsill</b> <b>Pillar 6: Dehumanization and Stigma</b>
<b>WEEK NINE</b> Week of August 29	<b>THEME: Might Makes Right</b>	<b>Pillar Seven: Terror as Enforcement, Cruelty as a Means of Control</b> <b>Pillar Eight: Inherent Superiority versus Inherent Inferiority</b>
<b>WEEK TEN</b> Week of September 5	<b>THEME: Brown Eyes versus Blue Eyes</b>	<b>Brown Eyes versus Blue Eyes</b> <b>Ch. 10 – Central Miscasting</b> <b>Ch. 11 – Dominant Group Status Threat and the Precarity of the Highest Rung</b> <b>Ch. 12 – A Scapegoat to Bear the Sins of the World</b>
<b>WEEK ELEVEN</b> Week of September 12	<b>THEME: Half as Worthy</b>	<b>Ch. 13 – The Insecure Alpha and the Purpose of an Underdog</b> <b>Ch. 14 – The Intrusion of Caste in Everyday Life</b> <b>Ch. 15 – The Urgent Necessity of a Bottom Rung</b>
<b>WEEK TWELVE</b> Week of September 19	<b>THEME: Perceived Scarcity</b>	<b>Ch. 16 – Last Place Anxiety: Packed in a Flooding Basement</b> <b>Ch. 17 – On the Early Front Lines of Caste</b> <b>Ch. 18 – Satchel Paige and the Illogic of Caste</b>
<b>WEEK THIRTEEN</b> Week of September 26	<b>THEME: Caught in an Illusion</b>	<b>Ch. 19 – The Euphoria of Hate</b> <b>Ch. 20 – The Inevitable Narcissism of Caste</b> <b>Ch. 21 – The German Girl with the Dark, Wavy Hair</b>
<b>WEEK FOURTEEN</b> Week of October 3	<b>THEME: All Roads Lead to Stockholm</b>	<b>Ch. 22 – The Stockholm Syndrome and the Survival of the Subordinate Caste</b> <b>Ch. 23 – Shock Troops on the Borders of Hierarchy</b> <b>Ch. 24 – Cortisol, Telomeres, and the Lethality of Caste</b>

<b>WEEK FIFTEEN</b> <b>Week of October 10</b>	<b>THEME: The Marks of a Great Divide</b>	<b>Ch. 25 – A Change in the Script</b> <b>Ch. 26 – Turning Point and the Resurgence of Caste</b> <b>Ch. 27 – The Symbols of Caste</b>
<b>WEEK SIXTEEN</b> <b>Week of October 17</b>	<b>THEME: The Price We Pay</b>	<b>Ch. 28 – Democracy on the Ballot</b> <b>Ch. 29 – The Price We Pay for a Caste System</b> <b>Ch. 30 – Shedding the Sacred Thread</b> <b>The Radicalization of the Dominant Caste</b> <b>Ch. 31 – The Heart Is the Last Frontier</b>

*"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 drivers 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 ONE - Theme for the Week**

Surfaces and Depths

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

PART ONE: TOXINS IN THE PERMAFROST AND HEAT RISING ALL AROUND

Ch. 1 – The Afterlife of Pathogens

Ch. 2 – An Old House and an Infrared Light

### **Scriptural Contexts**

#### **Matthew 7:1-5**

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

#### **Genesis 1:27**

So God created humans in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

#### **2 Corinthians 10:7**

Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. At the beginning of *Caste*, author Isabel Wilkerson shares the image of one lone dissenter amidst a crowd of Germans giving the Nazi salute. What would it mean—and what would it take—to be this person in today's culture? Could you be this person—why or why not?
2. Wilkerson compares the toxicity of racial relations in America to a dormant Siberian virus (anthrax) that re-emerges. Since we have current experience with the tenacity of viral

infection, how does this comparison speak to the pervasive idea that racism has been eradicated in American culture?

3. How do caste systems function and continue over time? How can we learn from our personal and cultural histories?

### Action Steps

It might be helpful to you to write in a journal or commit to weekly discussion with a group of people that you know well and trust, starting with where you are each week. How are you feeling - physically, mentally, spiritually? Where is God showing up in your life? What do you hear the Spirit saying to you? As we move through this study, the journal/discussion might help you track how you are doing, what the growing edges are and where Jesus is showing up.

Dig deep each day, perhaps you may feel moved to write prayers of confession and consider the questions of the baptismal liturgy, in the order in which they are given - renunciation, profession, living/discipleship – as you think through the issues that Wilkerson raises. Here are the baptismal questions:

Q1: "Do you renounce evil and its power in the world?"

Q2: "Who is your Lord and Savior?"

Q3: "Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his word and showing his love?"

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### WEEK TWO - Theme for the Week

Untouchable: The Divine and the Corrupt

### Readings from *Caste*

PART ONE: TOXINS IN THE PERMAFROST AND HEAT RISING ALL AROUND

Ch. 3 – "An American Untouchable"

## Scripture

Jewish law forbade touching lepers (Lev 5:3) and quarantined lepers from regular society (Lev 13:45-46); people avoided most contact with them (2 Kings 7:3). Some believed that the defilement of leprosy was one of the greatest defilements, for a leper could communicate diseased corruption even by entering a house. It is thus no small matter for Jesus to compassionately touch the man. Yet by touching Jesus does not actually undermine the law of Moses but fulfills its purpose by providing cleansing (Mt 5:17-48; compare Lev 13:3, 8, 10, 13, 17).

As often happens today, some people in antiquity constructed theological or cultural rationalizations for seeing others as “untouchables,” perhaps to escape from the fear that they too may be vulnerable and thus need to maintain social power and control.

## Genesis 1:27

So God created humans in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

## Questions for Reflection

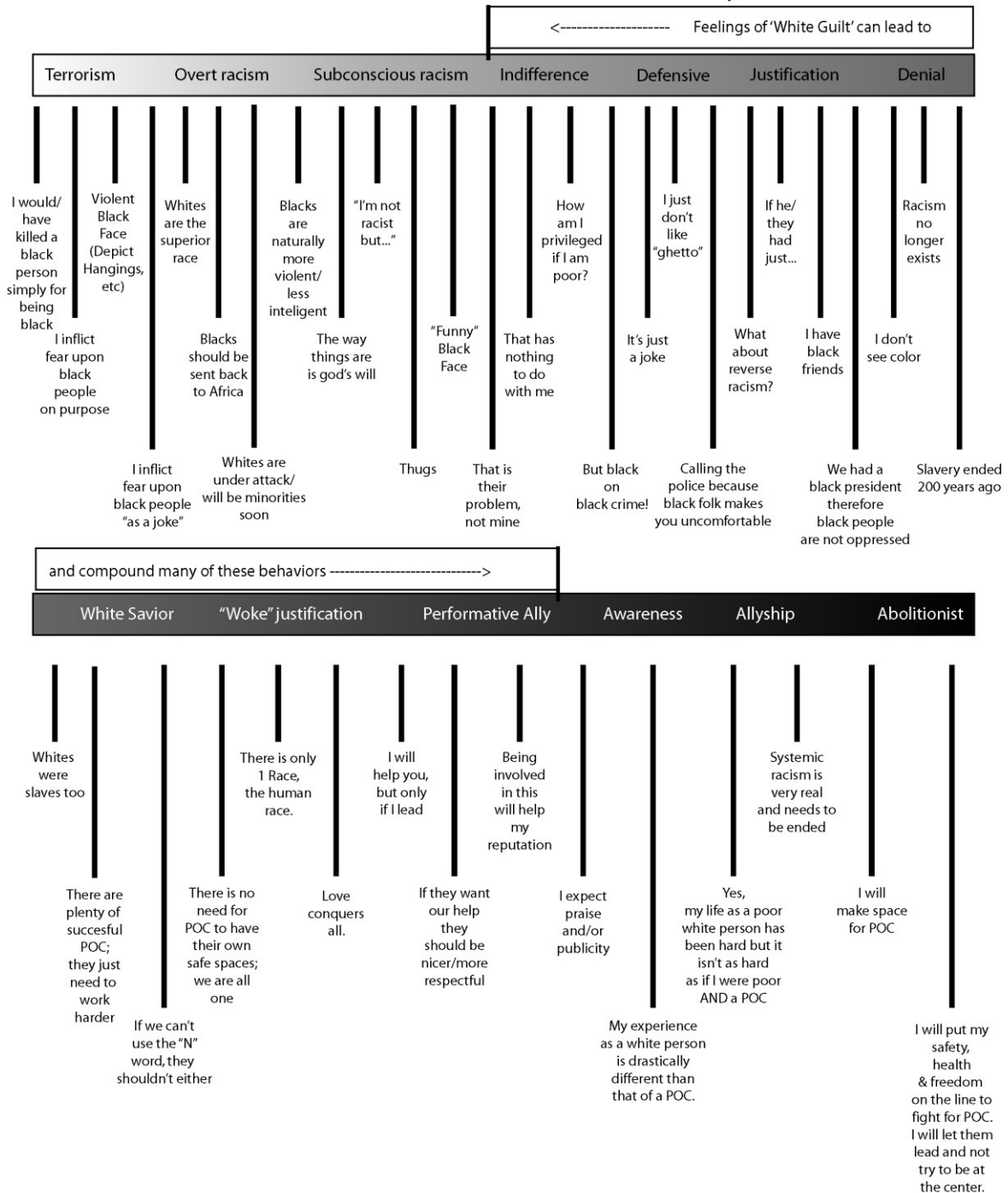
1. Wilkerson uses many different metaphors to help us visualize the negative impact of the American caste system: the bones inside a body, the beams inside a house, even the computer program in the 1999 film, *The Matrix*. How do these metaphors help you to understand how caste works in American culture?
2. What does it mean to be a leper in society? Whom does a caste system benefit? Whom does it harm? How?
3. What is your understanding of class and caste? How is class different from caste? How are these two concepts related?

## Action Steps

Take a look at the Racism Scale below. Take a long, hard, honest look. Where are you located? Where are you starting from? What were you taught? Where have you journeyed?

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# Racism Scale: Where do you fall?



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V4.0  
RacismScale.weebly.com

**\*Note: It is common for many people to move back & forth along the scale regularly, especially the middle parts**  
**\*\* The term "blacks" is used to be more familiar to anyone of those mentalities**  
**\*\*\* "Blacks" can be substituted with people of any nationality/ethnicity other than European white since it's people of European descent who have held institutional power in America since its inception.**



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

Containers

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

PART TWO: THE ARBITRARY CONSTRUCTION OF HUMAN DIVISIONS

Ch. 4 – A Long-Running Play and the Emergence of Caste in America

Ch. 5 – The Container We Have Built for You

#### **Scripture**

##### **Titus 3:5**

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

##### **Colossians 3:11**

Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

##### **Genesis 1:27**

So God created humans in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

1. "Before there was a United States of America," Wilkerson writes, "there was a caste system, born in colonial Virginia." How can Americans reckon with this fact? How can we make sense of a system of inequality that was firmly in place before the country itself came into being?
2. Whom does a caste system benefit, and whom does it harm? What kinds of benefits does the caste system make possible for those at the top?
3. Caste and race are not the same thing. What is the difference between the two? How do casteism and racism support each other?

## Action Steps

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) offers a way of personally assessing where you are in terms of bias and what goes on in your own mind. It's free and online. Carve out some time this week to take the test and then to continue the journaling project this week about your personal and community reflections.. The test can be accessed at this link: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

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## WEEK FOUR - Theme for the Week

Measuring Fog

### Readings from *Caste*

Ch. 6 – The Measure of Humanity

Ch. 7 – Through the Fog of Delhi to the Parallels in India and America

### Scripture

#### **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. How does learning about the lens and language of caste change how you look at American history and society?
2. How does the term "casteism" acknowledge an inherent power inequality in ways that the term "racism" may not?

## Action Steps

In her article, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack," Peggy McIntosh lists [50 questions](#) that are worth examining to get a deeper understanding of the lived experience of caste and race in America. The challenge for this week is to share what you learned after reflecting on this list with at least one other person, to have a brave and vulnerable conversation about what you are learning and what it means for you as a person of faith.

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## WEEK FIVE - Theme for the Week

Silent Witness

### Readings from *Caste*

Ch. 8 – The Nazis and the Acceleration of Caste

Ch. 9 – The Evil of Silence

### Scripture

#### **Habakkuk 1:13**

You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

#### **Ephesians 6:13**

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

#### **Genesis 1:27**

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

### Questions for Reflection

1. "Evil asks little of the dominant caste other than to sit back and do nothing," Wilkerson observes. Whether in the dominant caste or not, what are some ways that each of us can learn to see evil more clearly and stand up to the negative effects of the caste system?

2. Some factors that prompt silence in the face of evil include fear of death or injury, fear of ostracism, and fear of losing place or privilege. How do these fears silence us and how can we begin to face them to challenge evil?

### Action Steps

1. Take the time to read the [report](#) on *Disparities Experienced by Black Women and Girls* that didn't get addressed at the last PCUSA General Assembly. It will be revised for the Assembly in 2022 and updated.
  - What does this document convict you of in your local faith community?
  - What "noticings" do you need to have?
  - Are there things in this report that intersect with the life of your particular faith community and what you can be about? If not, what is new, and what do you need to learn about?
  - What help and conversation partners do you need?

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### 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 anthrōpōn*, 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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## **WEEK SEVEN - Theme for the Week**

As Pure and Chaste as Falling Snow

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

Pillar Three: Endogamy and the Control of Marriage and Mating

Pillar Four: Purity Versus Pollution

### **Scripture**

#### **James 4:8**

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

#### **Genesis 2:24**

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

#### **Deuteronomy 7:3-4**

You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Through belief that members of the subordinate caste are somehow dirty or polluted, the dominant caste can continue to excuse and perpetuate their exclusion from society. What surprised you most in the discussion of caste and purity in these two pillars?
2. How do social controls such as endogamy or purity laws help to sustain unequal power relationships within a stable caste system? What ideas did you find most significant in the explanation of these two pillars?

### Action Steps

Read the transcript from the PBS series, RACE - THE POWER OF AN ILLUSION EPISODE THREE: THE HOUSE WE LIVE IN, linked [HERE](#). If your group is feeling really creative, assign roles for a collective dramatic reading. Then, in discussion or in your journal, reflect upon the ideas or experiences that you find most significant and potentially transformative.

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### WEEK EIGHT - Theme for the Week

Social Tetris: Building a Tower of Power

### Readings from *Caste*

Pillar Five: Occupational Hierarchy – The Jatis and the Mudsill

Pillar Six: Dehumanization and Stigma

### Scripture

#### Matthew 25:40, 45

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me. .... Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of the least of these, ye did [it] not to me.

#### Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

#### Genesis 1:27

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

### Questions for Reflection

1. It is a widely held belief that in our capitalist American culture working-class white American may often act against their own interests by opposing policies designed to help the working class. Reflect on how the logic of caste disproves this idea. How does caste redefine this same choice from the perspective of maintaining group dominance?

## Action Steps

### EXERCISE: Whom to Leave Behind

This exercise may be used in your group, or, if you are individually reflecting on this week's readings, you may use it as a prompt for reflection and journaling.

The twelve persons listed below have been selected as passengers on a spaceship for a flight to another planet because tomorrow the planet Earth is doomed for destruction. Due to changes in space limitations, it has now been determined that only eight persons may go on this flight. The group on the flight are the surviving remnant to start a new culture.

Your task is to select the Eight (8) passengers who will make the trip. On your own, take approximately 5 minutes and rank order of the passengers from one to twelve based on those who you feel are most deserving to make the trip with one being most deserving and twelve being least deserving. Also decide on who should lead this group.

Next, the group discusses and decides who will make the trip. PLEASE NOTE: When you make your decision as a group EVERYONE must agree on the final eight passengers and come to a consensus on why these should be selected. You are NOT allowed to vote or take a "majority rules" decision.

#### Original passenger list:

- \_\_\_a white female accountant with a substance abuse problem
- \_\_\_a militant African-American female medical student
- \_\_\_a 33 year old male Native American manager who does not speak English
- \_\_\_the accountant's pregnant Japanese wife who works in retail service
- \_\_\_a famous female Malaysian novelist with a physical disability
- \_\_\_a 21-year old, female, Muslim international student who works in the maintenance dept.
- \_\_\_a Hispanic clergyman who is against homosexuality
- \_\_\_a white female movie star who was recently the victim of a sexual assault
- \_\_\_a white male armed police officer who has been accused of using excessive force
- \_\_\_a homosexual male, professional athlete
- \_\_\_an Asian, orphaned 12-year old boy
- \_\_\_a 60-year old female Jewish university administrator

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

### **Might Makes Right?**

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

Pillar Seven: Terror as Enforcement, Cruelty as a Means of Control

Pillar Eight: Inherent Superiority versus Inherent Inferiority

#### **Scripture**

Scapegoat, Hebrew sa'ir la-'Aza'zel, ("goat for Azazel"), in the [Yom Kippur ritual](#) described in the [Torah](#) (Leviticus 16:8–10), goat ritually burdened with the sins of the [Jewish people](#). The scapegoat was sent into the wilderness for [Azazel](#), possibly for the purpose of [placating](#) that evil spirit, while a separate goat was slain as an offering to God. By extension, a scapegoat has come to mean any group or individual that innocently bears the blame of others.

The use of scapegoats has a long and varied history involving many kinds of animals, as well as human beings. In [ancient Greece](#), human scapegoats (*pharmakoi*) were used to [mitigate](#) a plague or other [calamity](#) or even to prevent such ills. The Athenians chose a man and woman for the festival of [Thargelia](#). After being feasted, the couple was led around the town, beaten with green twigs, driven out of the city, and possibly even stoned. In this way the city was supposedly protected from ill fortune for another year.

#### **Genesis 1:27**

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

#### **Question for Reflection**

These two pillars explain how in each caste system, the prime message about the inherent superiority of the dominant caste and the inferiority of the lower castes are continually reinforced through the use of terror and cruelty. Being complicit with the use of terror and cruelty or joining in are rewarded. In this context, analyze the process of dehumanization and how it can lead to people justifying great acts of cruelty.

#### **Action Steps**

An essential practice within Jewish communities is *Tshuvah*, which is usually translated as repentance/returning. In Jewish tradition God can forgive us for our oversights and omissions that are

between God and us. However, before we approach God and ask for forgiveness, we must do *Tshuvah* for our behavior toward other people: We have to come to terms with those whom we have slighted or wronged and return to the relationship we had prior to the falling-out we experienced with them. Doing *Tshuvah* is about much more than repentance. It also involves a process where we engage with other people in trying to improve our connections and relationships. Doing *Tshuvah* does not mean standing on ceremony and repeating over and over again what someone did to harm or insult you. It does not mean dwelling on the negative aspect of your connection with others. Instead, its emphasis is on correcting whatever went wrong and re-establishing a positive relationship with the other person.

There is a simple five-step process for engaging in *Tshuvah* with the individual persons with whom we relate in our Jewish communal lives.

1. Identify the people with whom you feel tension or discomfort.
2. Gain clarity about whether the relationship is weak because of something they said or did to you or something you said or did to them.
3. Decide to approach the other person to "clear the air" and "straighten out the relationship."
4. Set a time to meet with the person so you can engage in a meaningful conversation, rather than catching them on the go.
5. Begin the conversation by saying that you have felt tension between the two of you or you realize that the two of you have not gotten along and you would like to try and make amends. Focus on what it will take to strengthen the relationship; do not go over and over who did what to whom.

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

### **Brown Eyes versus Blue Eyes**

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

*Brown Eyes versus Blue Eyes*

Ch. 10 – Central Miscasting

Ch. 11 – Dominant Group Status Threat and the Precarity of the Highest Rung

Ch. 12 – A Scapegoat to Bear the Sins of the World

## Scripture

### Mark 15:6-15

<sup>6</sup> Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. <sup>7</sup> A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. <sup>8</sup> The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. <sup>9</sup> "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, <sup>10</sup> knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. <sup>11</sup> But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. <sup>12</sup> "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. <sup>13</sup> "Crucify him!" they shouted. <sup>14</sup> "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" <sup>15</sup> Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

## Question for Reflection

In your journal or in your discussion group, discuss the following questions:

1. How do you feel about yourself and others when you are a member of the "in crowd," a group of students that is privileged in some way or has social power?
2. How do you feel about yourself and others when you are not a member of the "in crowd"?

## Action Steps

### The Personal Identity Wheel

- Personal identities are individual traits that make up who you are, including your hobbies, interests, experiences, and personal choices.
- Many personal identities are things that you get to choose and that you are able to shape for yourself. Personal identities might determine whether or not you have a natural inclination to go in a certain personal direction.

Click the link below to access the Personal Identity Wheel:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h02iQ3Aa1tNSv4doSACwhR1Ls47Dn\\_wC/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h02iQ3Aa1tNSv4doSACwhR1Ls47Dn_wC/view)

Fill in your identity for each of the categories listed. In the inner circle, record the identities that are the most important or salient to you. In the outer circle, record your other identities that are less important or salient to you but are still part of your identity. If you are in a discussion group, find a partner, preferably someone you don't know well, and briefly share two personal identities that are important to you and why they are important. Listen carefully to your partner and respond with an affirmative statement of understanding or a question to learn more about this person's identity.

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*- Arundati Roy*

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

### **Half as Worthy**

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

Ch. 13 – The Insecure Alpha and the Purpose of an Underdog

Ch. 14 – The Intrusion of Caste in Everyday Life

Ch. 15 – The Urgent Necessity of a Bottom Rung

#### **Scripture**

##### **Romans 3:20-24**

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This righteousness is given through faith in <sup>[a]</sup> Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

##### **Genesis 1:27**

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

#### **Question for Reflection**

In your journal or in your discussion group, discuss the following question:

How has the pandemic shifted how you feel about the American caste system? What was unseen for you that is now seen?

#### **Action Steps**

##### **The Social Identity Wheel**

- Our society strongly influences how we categorize other people and ourselves based on these identities in significant ways. Social identities influence the experiences we have as members of any particular group. They are shaped by common history, shared experiences, legal and historical decisions, and day-to-day interactions.
- Social identities also affect personal identities. For example, your social class may have a strong impact on the education you receive and the profession that you end up in.

Here is the link to the Social Identity Wheel:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w7yo6ljyS0pnvEO-BOrE7Aohmaa9n5Jf/view>

Please fill out this wheel the same way you filled out the personal identity wheel. In the inner circle, record the identities that are the most important or salient to you, and in the outer circle record other identities that are less important or salient to you at this moment in time.

Again, share your wheel with a partner and explain a few of your identities and why you placed them in the inner or outer circle. Note: What you share from your own social identity wheel will impact how reflective participants will be about their own identities. Here is an example of how honest and reflective you are encouraged to be when sharing your own social identity wheel:

"I wrote 'white,' for my race, in the inner circle. I put this in the inner circle because while in this case I am part of the dominant racial group in our society, I also am constantly working to understand how my whiteness affords me privileges in my everyday life, compared with the oppression that people of color face. This is something that I think about and engage with a lot, so this identity is very salient for me.

"In the outer circle I listed my identity in the ability/health category as 'able and healthy.' I did this because I move through my day-to-day life with relative ease. I can go where I need to and do what I need to do without interruption based on disability or health concerns. Not only am I privileged in this regard, but in doing this exercise I also realized that this is something I take for granted and do not give a lot of thought to."

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

### **Perceived Scarcity**

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

Ch. 16 – Last Place Anxiety: Packed in a Flooding Basement

Ch. 17 – On the Early Front Lines of Caste

Ch. 18 – Satchel Paige and the Illogic of Caste

## Scripture

### Luke 6: 37-38

37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

### 2 Corinthians 6-8

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

## Question for Reflection

In your journal or in your discussion group, discuss the following question:

James Baldwin said: "No one was white before he/she came to America." Discuss what this quote means to your understanding of our current caste system.

## Action Steps

It might be helpful to you to write in a journal or commit to weekly discussion with a group of people that you know well and trust, starting with where you are each week. How are you feeling - physically, mentally, spiritually? Where is God showing up in your life? What do you hear the Spirit saying to you? As we move through this study, the journal/discussion might help you track how you are doing, what the growing edges are and where Jesus is showing up. Dig deep each day, perhaps you may feel moved to write prayers of confession and consider the questions of the baptismal liturgy, in the order in which they are given - renunciation, profession, living/discipleship – as you think through the issues that Wilkerson raises.

Here are the baptismal questions: Q1: "Do you renounce evil and its power in the world?" Q2: "Who is your Lord and Savior?" Q3: "Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his word and showing his love?"

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

### **Caught in an Illusion**

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

Ch. 19 – *The Euphoria of Hate*

Ch. 20 – The Inevitable Narcissism of Caste

Ch. 21 – The German Girl with the Dark, Wavy Hair

#### **Scripture**

##### **2 Timothy 3:2-5**

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

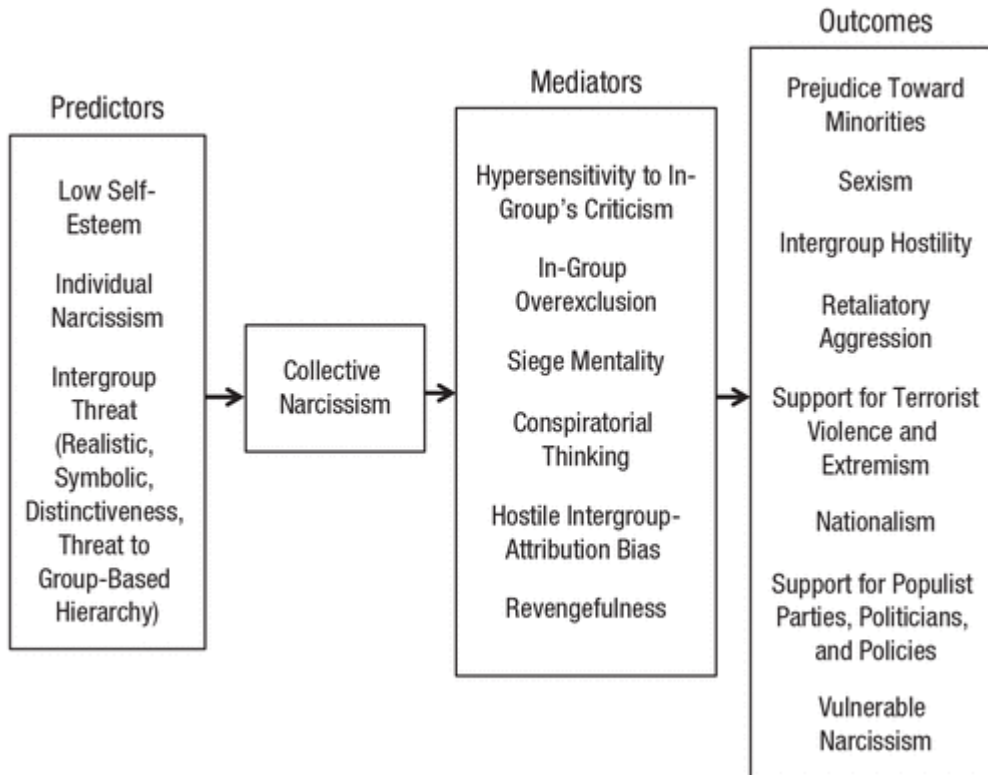
##### **Genesis 1:27**

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

#### **Question for Reflection**

In your journal or in your discussion group, discuss the following question:

Reflect carefully on this chart that diagrams groups narcissism



Erich Fromm wrote about how group narcissism – membership in a larger group determines self-worth, hatred of others, and belief in one’s own self-importance – leads to fascism. How has that played out in America in the last few decades?

### Action Steps

Here are five techniques that groups use to achieve domination:

1. **Making invisible:** silencing and marginalizing people by ignoring them. It includes for instance reformulating a colleague’s idea as one’s own, taking the floor when it is another one’s turn to speak or not paying attention (e.g. by talking, browsing through papers or checking e-mails) while someone else is speaking.
2. **Ridicule:** portraying someone else’s arguments in a ridiculing way, or commenting on someone’s appearance.
3. **Withholding information:** sharing information among an inner circle, without telling everyone concerned. For instance making decisions not at the board meeting where everyone is present, but in a small group at the bar afterwards.
4. **Double bind:** putting people in a situation in which they will be belittled and penalized whichever alternative they choose or regardless of how they act. For example, when a person does a thorough job at work, there are complaints for being too slow. Yet, when the work is done more quickly, there is criticism for being sloppy.
5. **Blaming and shaming:** embarrassing someone, or insinuating that they are themselves to blame for their position.

And here are some tools to respond to the use of these techniques:



1. **Look around you** and make sure that everyone is truly seen and heard. Use your own power and agency to provide visibility to those who are silenced or marginalized.
2. **Listen carefully** for comments that ridicule others, and speak up to urge civility
3. **Ask questions** in a civil way to ensure that all stakeholders have appropriate information.
4. **Work to establish common standards** that apply to everyone in the same way and invite everyone who will be subject to these standards to collaborate in creating them.
5. **Establish group norms and values** that respect everyone's dignity and "call in" those who engage in blaming and shaming,

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

### **All Roads Lead to Stockholm**

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

Ch. 22 – The Stockholm Syndrome and the Survival of the Subordinate Caste

Ch. 23 – Shock Troops on the Borders of Hierarchy

Ch. 24 – Cortisol, Telomeres, and the Lethality of Caste

#### **Scripture**

##### **Romans 12:17-21**

Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### Question for Reflection

In your journal or in your discussion group, discuss the following question:

Is the concept of "give the wall" (lower caste stepping out of the way for upper caste) new to you?  
How have you experienced this in your life?

### 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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### WEEK FIFTEEN - Theme for the Week

#### The Marks of a Great Divide

#### Readings from *Caste*

Ch. 25 – A Change in the Script

Ch. 26 – Turning Point and the Resurgence of Caste

Ch. 27 – The Symbols of Caste

#### Scripture

##### Matthew 25:40, 45

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me. . . . Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of the least of these, ye did [it] not to me.

##### Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

### Genesis 1:27

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

### Question for Reflection

In your journal or in your discussion group, discuss the following question:

Germans are ashamed of their Nazi history in a way Americans are not ashamed of slavery. Why do you think Germany was able to humanize their victims and develop laws to enforce “never again” while America still has markers of slavery like statues and confederate flags?

### 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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### WEEK SIXTEEN - Theme for the Week

#### The Price We Pay

#### Readings from *Caste*

Ch. 28 – Democracy on the Ballot

Ch. 29 – The Price We Pay for a Caste System

Ch. 30 – Shedding the Sacred Thread

*The Radicalization of the Dominant Caste*

Ch. 31 – The Heart Is the Last Frontier

## Scripture

### Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

### Galatians 2: 8-13

For He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles. <sup>9</sup> When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, understood the grace that was given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. <sup>10</sup> Only they requested that we should remember the poor, which I also was eager to do. <sup>11</sup> But when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him face to face, because he stood condemned. <sup>12</sup> Before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles. But when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. <sup>13</sup> And the other Jews, likewise, joined together in hypocrisy with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

## Question for Reflection

In your journal or in your discussion group, discuss the following questions:

1. How did the things mentioned in this book regarding the history of enslavement and race in America compare with what you were taught growing up?
2. Do you think a "world without caste" is possible?

## Action Steps

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) offers a way of personally assessing where you are in terms of bias and what goes on in your own mind. It's free and online. Carve out some time this week to take the test and then to continue the journaling/discussion project this week about your personal and community reflections.. The test can be accessed at this link: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

How has your understanding grown since Week Three?