

WADE IN THE WATER: Preaching about Race and the Church

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Introductions

OPENING PRAYER

BETH RUPE

What we'll cover

WHAT TO EXPECT

Moving from the “front porch” to the “back porch”

- Real talk
- Deconstruction – reconstruction
- Remember – God’s a-gonna trouble the water!



Emotions you may feel

Challenged

Anger

Withdrawal

Overwhelmed

Guilt

Argumentative

Righteous

Frustrated



Recognize that these are
defense mechanism that keep us from
being held accountable.

How to handle those feelings

Listen deeply

Sit with those feelings.

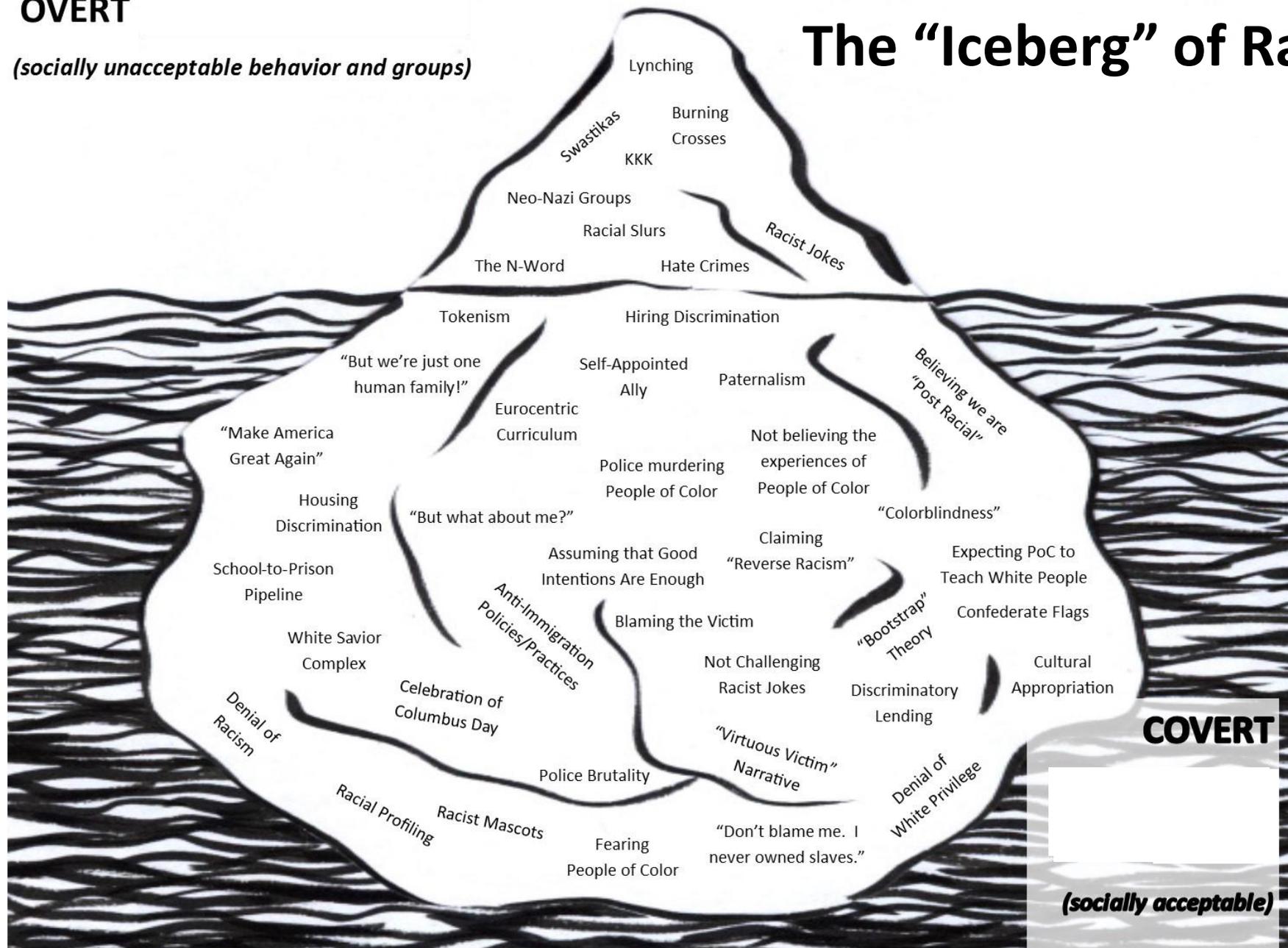
But don't let them block the content that we are offering - which is an opportunity to “get real” and have “real talk” about racism in the church.



OVERT

(socially unacceptable behavior and groups)

The "Iceberg" of Racism



Questions?

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH DECONSTRUCTING RACIALIZED SYSTEMS AND PRIVILEGE?



- Not yet in the water



- Shallow



- Intermediate



- Deep

PERSONAL

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH DECONSTRUCTING RACIALIZED SYSTEMS AND PRIVILEGE? [personal]

Not yet in the water



“I have a black friend.”

“I don’t see color.”

“It’s not always about race.”

“I’m nice to everyone.”

Shallow:

Watching a movie/documentary

Reading a book

Signing petition

Going to lunch with BIPOC

Voting [in LOW RISK area]



Intermediate:

Calling out a racist joke told by friend/family member

Invited BIPOC friend to home for a meal

Affirming the story and/or experience of a BIPOC friend or associate

Publicly acknowledge BLM (wearing shirt, posting sign) [in LOW RISK area]



Publicly opposing systemic racism (protests, sit-ins, etc.) [in LOW RISK area]

Asking “what is it like for you?” - then believing and trusting what is shared with you

Voting - [in HIGH RISK area]

Leveraging your privilege to open up space to BIPOC, then stepping back

Attending anti-racism workshop

Donating to and/or patronizing BIPOC businesses and organizations

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH DECONSTRUCTING RACIALIZED SYSTEMS AND PRIVILEGE? [personal]

Deep:

Engaging my social circle about systemic racism (willing to have difficult, even painful conversations)

Publicly acknowledge BLM (wearing shirt, posting sign) [in HIGH RISK area]

Publicly opposing systemic racism (protests, sit-ins, etc.) [in HIGH RISK area]

Divesting of privilege (giving up my space so that the voices and experiences of BIPOC are centered)

Basing my decisions and actions by centering voices and experiences of BIPOC

Ensuring accountability in the realms of power: finances, business, banking, education, medicine (not just service industry)

Person of color in authority in my life



CONGREGATION

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH DECONSTRUCTING RACIALIZED SYSTEMS AND PRIVILEGE? [congregation]



Not yet in the pool:

“It’s not an issue for us.”

“We welcome everyone.”

“Focusing on race is what divides us.”

“They worship so differently than us.”

“They don’t want to worship with us. They have their own church.”

“We invited them, but they don’t show up.”

Shallow:

Watching a movie/documentary

Doing a book study

Participate in joint ecumenical service.

Pulpit exchange

Incorporating spirituals into music

MLK program

Regular prayers in public liturgy



WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH DECONSTRUCTING RACIALIZED SYSTEMS AND PRIVILEGE? [congregation]

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR CONGREGATION IS IN THE “SHALLOW END” FOR PREACHING ABOUT RACE?



- You've never preached a sermon in which you've mentioned race, white privilege, or white supremacy
- You've *barely mentioned* race, white privilege, or white supremacy in a sermon and have received negative pushback
 - Complaints, angry words, emails, “sniping,” silent treatment, “ghosting”
- You've directly addressed race, white privilege, or white supremacy in a sermon and have received negative pushback
 - “You're being ‘too political.’”
 - “Stay in your lane.”
 - “I come to church to worship God, not be told I'm a racist.”
 - “Why are you judging me for being white?”
 - “It's not an issue for us.”
 - “We welcome everyone.”
 - “Focusing on race is what divides us.”



WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH DECONSTRUCTING RACIALIZED SYSTEMS AND PRIVILEGE? [congregation]

Intermediate:

Public acknowledgement (sign on church property) [in LOW RISK area]

Engage church around systemic racism (deep conversations)

Donating to BIPOC church/charity

Artwork that shows people of diverse backgrounds (more than “white hippy Jesus”)

Hosting an anti-racism workshop

Inviting BIPOC organizations, groups, etc. to share space in the church

Ongoing relationship with congregation of color

Members attend event in a cross-cultural space

Donating to and/or patronizing BIPOC businesses and organizations

Raise money for the work of anti-racism



WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH DECONSTRUCTING RACIALIZED SYSTEMS AND PRIVILEGE? [congregation]

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR CONGREGATION IS IN THE “INTERMEDIATE” LEVEL FOR PREACHING ABOUT RACE?



- You've directly addressed race, white privilege, or white supremacy in a sermon and there's been little to no negative pushback BUT no response to the invitation to action.
 - Haven't moved beyond the book study.
 - Lack of participation in anti-racism workshops
 - Signs of white discomfort in non-white spaces (“huddling in the corner” at multi-cultural events, outreach, etc.)
- You've bumped up against the edges of unspoken but sacralized whiteness. Signs might include:
 - Microaggressions
 - Passive aggressive efforts to undermine anti-racism work
 - “Checking the box” syndrome
 - “White savior complex” (white righteousness)
 - Defensiveness when pointing out unconscious bias and hidden assumptions around whiteness and blackness

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH DECONSTRUCTING RACIALIZED SYSTEMS AND PRIVILEGE? [congregation]

Deep:

Public acknowledgement (sign on church property) [in HIGH RISK area]

Making anti-racism part of yearly church curriculum - for all ages (like an Advent study every year)

Budget line for anti-racism and justice work

Provide training for BIPOC leaders to equip them for the work

State expectation for staff, parishioners, leaders, etc. that all people will be treated with respect and honor - setting the tone

Holding whites accountable for micro-aggressions

BIPOC on staff and congregational leadership positions

Require all STAFF in anti-racism training and cross-cultural experience on a regular basis

Regular opportunities for PARISHIONERS to work and serve in cross-cultural spaces



WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH DECONSTRUCTING RACIALIZED SYSTEMS AND PRIVILEGE? [congregation]

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR CONGREGATION IS READY FOR THE “DEEP” LEVEL FOR PREACHING ABOUT RACE?

- You’ve directly addressed race, white privilege, or white supremacy in a sermon and there’s been little to no negative pushback AND they’ve done at least THREE of the actions in the INTERMEDIATE LEVEL.
- Still some vestiges of negative pushback, resistance, or “white exhaustion”:
 - Microaggressions
 - Passive aggressive efforts to undermine anti-racism work
 - “Checking the box” syndrome
 - “White savior complex” (white righteousness)
 - Defensiveness when pointing out unconscious bias and hidden assumptions around whiteness and blackness
- Even congregations in the “deep end” need ongoing encouragement, challenge, and accountability. Preaching accompanies them through this process.



QUESTIONS?

WHERE IS YOUR CONGREGATION?

You will choose your small group accordingly.



• Not yet in the water



• Shallow



• Intermediate



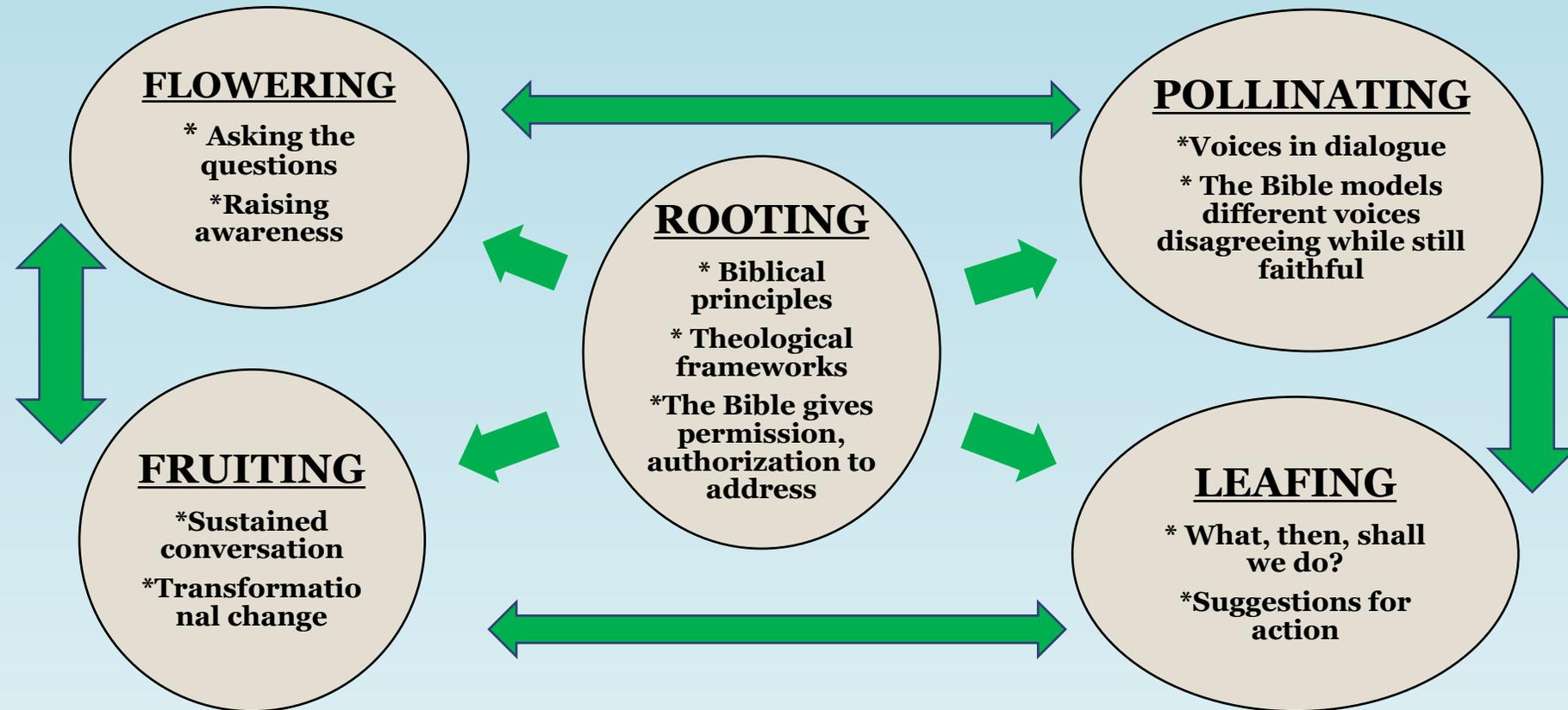
• Deep

If your congregation is in this group (Shallow – Intermediate), you'll go to Leah's break-out session.

If your congregation is in this group (Intermediate - Deep), you'll go to Sonna's break-out session.

15-MINUTE BREAK

FIVE PATHS OF PROPHETIC PREACHING



From: *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide* by Leah D. Schade (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

Hermeneutical Principles for Preaching and Race



1. Hermeneutic of suspicion

- a. Interrogate the text: don't believe everything you read (or what people say that it means, especially white folks)



2. Be prepared to ask questions (God's a-gonna trouble the water!)

- a. Who is NOT speaking? Who is ABSENT from the text? How do you stretch this text to incorporate the fullness of the gospel?



3. Hold every speaker or actor to the highest tenets of the gospel

- a. If they fall short, call them on it.

(Even Jesus himself! Remember Syrophenician woman!)

No interpretation of the text should leave anyone – racist or not – out of the grace of the gospel.

FIVE PATHS OF PROPHETIC PREACHING

with Hermeneutical Principles for Preaching and Race

FLOWERING

- * Asking the questions
- * Raising awareness



POLLINATING

- * Voices in dialogue
- * The Bible models different voices disagreeing while still faithful



ROOTING

- * Biblical principles
- * Theological frameworks
- * The Bible gives permission, authorization to address



FRUITING

- * Sustained conversation
- * Transformational change



LEAFING

- * What, then, shall we do?
- * Suggestions for action



 Hermeneutic of Suspicion

 Ask Questions

 Hold to the gospel

QUESTIONS?

TEXTS WE WILL EXAMINE

Shallow End:

Acts 9:1-19 – OPTION ONE

- **Saul's conversion experience where his eyes are opened to the pain of those he persecutes.**
- **Central Question:** What are examples of “scales falling from eyes” to see the truth of Jesus’s justice-seeking love for the American church founded on and perpetuating racism? What is the conversion we are see(k)ing today?

TEXTS WE WILL EXAMINE

Shallow End:

Acts 9:1-19 – OPTION TWO

- **God brings Saul and Ananias together – the oppressor and the oppressed – to disrupt a program of persecution and convert the persecutor.**
- **Central Question:** What was it like for Ananias to come face-to-face with the architect of his people's persecution? What was it like for Saul to be at the mercy of those he persecuted?

TEXTS WE WILL EXAMINE

Intermediate:

Amos 7:7-17

- Recognizing what's going on and becoming a prophet.
- **Central Question:** When considering those who speak out for racial justice, what truth comes to light when we look at the “who” as much as, if not more than, the “why”?

TEXTS WE WILL EXAMINE

Deep end:

Matthew 18:21-35

- The parable about the Unforgiving Servant shows us that forgiveness is essential – but so is accountability.
- **Central Question:** What can white folks learn from the parable of the Unforgiving Servant when it comes to racial justice?

THE CHALLENGE:

- Choose one of these texts to preach a sermon addressing racism in your congregation sometime before Jan. 14, 2021.



Reminder: Choose your group according to where your congregation is at this time.



- Not yet in the water



- Shallow



- Intermediate



- Deep

If your congregation is in this group
(Shallow – Intermediate), you'll go to
Leah's break-out session.

If your congregation is in this group
(Intermediate - Deep), you'll go to
Sonna's break-out session.

WELCOME BACK!

NEXT STEPS

- Preach a sermon addressing racism in your congregation sometime before Jan. 14, 2021
- Coaching meeting on January 14
- Preach a second sermon addressing racism (going deeper!) before March 11, 2021
- Coaching meeting on March 11

