



THE NAVIGATORS

KINDRED

A Seven-Session Bible Study on
GOD'S VISION FOR MULTIETHNIC UNITY

Kindred



Published in alliance with Tyndale House Publishers

A stylized graphic of a tree with a central trunk and several large, rounded branches. The branches are filled with various shades of gray, from light to dark, and are outlined in white. The overall composition is abstract and modern.

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GOD'S VISION FOR MULTIETHNIC UNITY

Kindred: A Seven-Session Bible Study on God's Vision for Multiethnic Unity

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Introduction

Imago Dei. The image of God. The bond that links all human beings together is this: We are each created in the image of God. From our most beloved to our most disdained, this is what we have in common with all humanity.

From the perspective of God's Kingdom, this universal human kinship is what Jesus appealed to when he called us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39).

From the world's perspective, human kinship is the stuff genealogies are made of. Kinship sets boundaries around whom we marry and who inherits our stuff. Anthropologists tell us that blood-based kinship is the most foundational aspect of virtually every culture that's ever existed. Blood-based kinship is the basis for hard distinctions between "us" and "them," between insiders and outsiders, reaching all the way from family and national ties to clashes across ethnicities.

Jesus turned the world's blood-based kinship constructs upside down. When told that his mother and brothers were outside wanting to see him, he responded, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21, ESV). In Jesus' Kingdom, kinship is based not on the blood of our ancestors but on the blood he shed for us on the cross. The presence of the Holy Spirit, not DNA, is the mark of our Kingdom kinship, pointing back to that most basic connection we all share—the *imago Dei*. Our kinship with Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit empower us to love all who bear the image of God and to open our hearts to all whom God calls into Jesus' Kingdom family.

Kindred is a Bible-study resource created by The Navigators in response to the strife-ridden cultural moment we find ourselves in. This guide will help you explore questions of kinship such as these in the light of God's Word:

- Amid such wide human diversity, what is God's heart for humanity?
- In the face of ongoing hostility dividing us from one another, what remedy does God offer?

But these aren't abstract questions. *Kindred* will help you wrestle with Jesus' Kingdom vision for your own discipleship. As you work through this study, ask yourself these questions:

- *How is God at work in my own thinking and feeling about ethnicity and division?*

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- *What is God calling me (and us) to as his kindred—lights shining in a world under the shadow of hostility?*

Kindred was created with the following values:

- built on the foundation of substantive personal Bible study exploring God's story
- responsive to the insights of a large, diverse team working in close collaboration
- pointed toward our shared kinship with Christ while representing the stories and experiences of a broad range of backgrounds
- designed for small groups who welcome vulnerability and reject false shame even in the face of uncomfortable conversations
- supportive of honest processing of pain and shame associated with ethnic/racial tensions at the global, national, relational, and personal level
- equipping for discipleship conversations with a strong biblical foundation

Kindred features seven content sessions that explore God's story as it unfolds in Scripture, starting before Creation and continuing into eternity. Each session considers numerous Bible passages, building toward a sweeping biblical theology from Genesis to Revelation.

Expect to spend one to three hours in individual preparation for each session's Bible study. Group discussion

should take ninety minutes to two hours. Certain questions in each session are particularly important to personal growth and productive discussion; each one is preceded by the image of a key. Be sure to give these adequate time and consideration.

Some readings reference a particular translation or paraphrase of the Bible. You can read passages in your preferred Bible version, but you can access other versions easily through various websites (for example, BibleGateway.com) or applications (for example, the YouVersion Bible App).

Advance preparation is essential for this Bible study. Attempting to wing it can cause misunderstanding because these discussions touch on highly sensitive issues. So commit to the advance work and come prepared for the group work. The facilitator's guide at the end of the book can help your group move through these discussions circumspectly.

As you work through *Kindred*, you'll probably come across something that makes you uncomfortable, confronts strong opinions you hold, triggers something painful from your history, or irritates you in a way you can't identify. You might also encounter content that seems irrelevant, comes from a source you don't care for or trust, or uses unfamiliar or troubling terms. We encourage you to pray your way through each question, asking God to draw your attention to what he wants you to learn from the challenging content.

This resource was born from two years of collaborative study, research, and prayer. Along the way we have shared

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our stories with one another, listening until it hurt, wading through mistrust and disagreement. We have shared abundant tears and laughter. It was well worth the labor as kindred for the joy set before us: advancing the Good News of Jesus and his Kingdom into all the nations.

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Additional resources to supplement your group's experience of *Kindred* can be found at navresources.learnupon.com/content-details/3200823/0. A registration is required (at no cost to you) to access the content.



SESSION 1

ONE & MANY

God's Story in Genesis

The story begins as God, the Creator, establishes his beloved image bearers in a garden on planet Earth, giving us the mandate to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28, *ESV*). We were thriving in relationship with our Creator, one another, and the land around us. But then Satan and sin entered with a vengeance. The result? Doubt and disobedience joined pride and hostility to open grievous divides—between God and his people, between men and women, between siblings and siblings, and eventually between people groups.

But our loving Creator's good purposes for his human family couldn't be thwarted. Even in these first chapters of the Scriptures, we see signs that God would use human divisions

and scattering for fruitful multiplication. His plan would involve forming a nation from one chosen man, Abram, and his wife, Sarai. And from them would come many—in fact, a people who would be tasked with being a blessing to all the nations.

Session 1 has seven readings from the book of Genesis for you to interact with. Go through the readings individually ahead of time so you're prepared to discuss them with your group.



Reading One (Genesis 1:11, 21, 25-27, 31)

1. What do you notice about the incredible variety in God's created world?



2. Until verse 26, God has not created anything after his own kind. So he makes us in his image to resemble and represent him. What do you think it means to be an image bearer of our triune God? Whom does this include?

The Hebrew word translated “image” in Genesis 1:26-27 is *tselem*. It’s a masculine noun meaning “image,” “replica,” “pattern,” “copy,” or “offspring.” *Tselem* means that we humans are imprecise copies of God, who is the original! Only humans hold his Spirit and are temples of his glory. This idea is called the *imago Dei*—the truth is that all people are made in God’s image and thus are granted dignity and purpose.

Demuth (Hebrew)—translated “likeness” in Genesis 1:26—is a feminine noun meaning “likeness,” “similarity,” or “expression.” We humans can grow to become like God and share in his attributes. This happens over time as God raises us as his children and teaches us his ways, nature, and character. We become like him—and that brings him glory.

3. How do you see the image and likeness of God in people who don’t resemble you?



Reading Two (Genesis 1:28; Acts 17:26-28)

Consider reading Acts 17:26-28 in *The Voice* version of the Bible.

In Genesis 1:28, God gives humanity our first job description—what Nancy Pearcey, in her book *Total Truth*, describes

as nothing less than “to develop the *social* world . . . [and] to harness the *natural* world.”¹ These instructions are known as the cultural mandate:

the command to exercise dominion over the earth, subdue it, and develop its latent potential (Gen. 1:26-28; cf. Gen. 2:15). God calls all humans, as those made in his image, to fill the earth with his glory through creating what we commonly call culture.

. . . The cultural mandate is given to all people. . .
. . . to give glory to God.²

1. What are some specific ways humanity has fulfilled and is still fulfilling God’s command in Genesis 1:28?

- 🔑 2. Acts 17:26-28 is another expression of the cultural mandate. What were God’s purposes in making diverse people groups from one man? How would you explain your answer to a child?

3. All cultures, civilizations, and societies are flawed—mixtures of good and bad. Reflect on something in your own culture that has nudged you to search for and find God. What is it? How have other cultures helped you search for and find God?



Reading Three (Genesis 3:1-13)

The serpent enters the scene. It represents Satan, who has rebelled against God and is waging war on earth against God, focusing his efforts on the hearts and minds of humans. The place of blessing becomes the place of curse. Dominion becomes domination.

1. What tactics did Satan use to trick Adam and Eve into disobeying God? How did this impact their view of God and themselves?

2. How do you see Satan's lies and deception still at work today, trying to separate people from God? And from one another, especially across ethnicities? (See John 8:44.)



3. Dishonoring others often takes the form of stereotyping—attributing specific character traits to whole people groups. How do you think stereotypes come into being? What stereotypes do you recall being used during your own upbringing that you now recognize as unfair generalizations?

4. Why is it important to reflect on the role of stereotyping in our childhoods?

**Reading Four (Genesis 4:1-16)**

Notice how quickly—in only one generation!—Adam and Eve’s disobedience bore the bitter fruit of murder. This happened when their son Cain opened the door to anger and sin, stopped seeing himself as his brother Abel’s keeper, and killed him. Cain’s killing of Abel was the first murder in human history, but it wasn’t the last. History is littered with stories of individuals and whole people groups being murdered. Their blood now cries out from the ground in a chorus.

1. What do you imagine Cain was thinking that gave him permission to murder his brother?



2. When God heard the voice of Abel’s blood crying out from the ground (verse 10), what do you imagine it was saying? What is the chorus of the murdered singing?

The Mark of Cain and the Curse of Ham

Have you ever heard of the “mark [of] Cain” (Genesis 4:15) being dark skin? For years, many Europeans and Americans abused this Scripture passage to justify viewing Black people as cursed by God and therefore deserving to be enslaved. But the Bible says no such thing. In fact, it says that God marked Cain to protect him, not to curse him: “The LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him” (verse 15). This passage does not even mention skin color.

Genesis 9:25-27 was also misinterpreted during this same time period to justify enslaving Black Africans. In fact, the “curse of Ham” had nothing whatsoever to do with Africans or skin color. Instead, the focus was on punishing Ham’s son, Canaan, which happened when Israel conquered the Canaanites.

What kind of damage can be done if we believe racial lies and the impact of related racist attitudes today?

3. Who else’s blood comes to mind as crying out to God from the ground? Think past or present, individual or group, international or in America or within your own family.

4. Why do you think Jesus' blood "speaks a better word" (Hebrews 12:24) than Abel's?



Reading Five (Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:5-11)

Languages reflect the beauty and complexity of different cultures. But in the first passage we see the confusion that different languages introduce between different peoples.

1. How do you feel when you are among people speaking a different language or dialect (or even the same language as you but with a different accent)? When has language been a troubling barrier or a helpful bridge to a relationship for you?



2. What do you think God was seeking to prevent or promote by scattering the people and confusing their language? (See also Genesis 10:31-32.)

3. Read Acts 2:5-11. At Pentecost, God didn't introduce a single language for all his people to use. Instead, he enabled people of all ethnic groups to hear the gospel in their own languages. How do you see this passage relating to the events at the tower of Babel, including to the value God places on the diversity of his people?



Reading Six (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:5-6; 18:17-19)

As you read these passages, highlight (or notice) all references to “nation” or “nations.” There are five, all of which come from the Hebrew word *goy*, which means “nation,” “people,” or “Gentiles.”³ This usually refers to the non-Hebrew people (Gentiles) living around and among the Israelites. The New Testament equivalent for *goy* is the Greek word *ethnos* or *ethnē*, from which we get the English word *ethnicity*. Within the last five hundred years, people have come to associate ethnicity with skin color, but this connection was largely absent from the original Greek and Hebrew. When ethnicity is combined with skin color, we often describe it as “race” in modern English.

1. When God called Abram, what did he promise, and what did he command Abram to do? (See Genesis 18:19.)

There are mainly two Hebrew words translated “justice” in the Old Testament:

- *Mishpat* denotes judgment, as in deciding a controversial legal case justly.
- *Tsedeq* (or *tsedaqah*) is a broader term that is often translated either “justice” or “righteousness.” It has several shades of meaning, including behaving rightly, speaking honestly and truthfully, deciding a court case correctly, and declaring a verdict about who is in the right.

Mishpat and *tsedeq* often are used together, as here in Genesis 18:19.



2. How might the practices of righteousness and justice be essential to advancing the gospel into the nations and to making disciples?

3. How are you putting Genesis 18:19 into practice in your home and/or ministry?



Reading Seven (Genesis 16:6-16)

There was just one problem with God’s promise to bless “all nations on earth” (Genesis 18:18) through Abram’s offspring: Abram didn’t have any! And his wife, Sarai, was too old to get pregnant. Their solution was to have a baby through a surrogate mother—Sarai’s Egyptian servant, Hagar. But Hagar’s pregnancy bred trouble, inciting Hagar’s contempt and Sarai’s fury and harshness. Sarai was so harsh that Hagar ran away. We pick up the story when the angel of the Lord finds Hagar in the desert.



1. When God’s angel found Hagar, she was not only pregnant and a foreigner but also rejected, homeless, desperate, and expecting herself and her unborn son to die in the wilderness. What was so personally significant about the name that Hagar gave to God (verse 13)?

2. When victims of hostility and desperation realize that God truly sees, watches over, and dignifies them, how might this impact them?

3. What does God see in you and say about you? How have you been impacted by this?

Wrapping It Up . . .

. . . by personal reflection

1. Which parts of this study resonated with you? Troubled you? Left you hungry for more?

... *by connecting*

2. How does something explored in this session connect with the gospel of Jesus and his Kingdom?

... *by passing it on*

3. Write a simple plan for discipling another person through one Scripture passage from this session.

... *by noting the key nuggets*

4. What do these Scripture passages add to your growing understanding of God's heart for people of all ethnicities and for justice? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Every single person bears God's image, giving everyone equal dignity and value in God's eyes.

- Although humanity creates diverse cultures and social systems, they all fall short of God’s ideal. So people reach out to God, who alone offers a better culture—Jesus’ Kingdom culture.
- Just as Satan deceived Adam and Eve with false ideas about God and about them in the Garden, Satan fuels false narratives about other ethnicities to divide us today.

Below, add some key nuggets (observations and meaningful takeaways for practical applications, lessons, and understanding) that you noticed:

Going Deeper

These first chapters of Genesis remind us that even before God laid out plans for this world, he yearned for a family—beings bearing his image, after his own kind—to relate to him as beloved sons and daughters. The privilege of bearing God’s image has endowed every person who has ever lived with innate dignity and worth. But humans have not always lived with this truth in mind. Sin entered the picture,

dividing us from God and from one another. The groundwork was laid for interpersonal, national, and cultural hostilities, and eventually for racism.

While humans were dividing themselves from one another, God was laying the groundwork to bless all nations (all the *goyyim*) through his promised redemption. It's worth staying in his story to trace what unfolds next. In session 2, you will continue walking through God's story in Exodus through Deuteronomy.