

# MLK Day ON!

## *Discussion Guide for Families with Youth*

### Conversation Tips for Parents/Guardians

#### **Set it up properly.**

Tell your youth you would like to have a conversation with them about Martin Luther King Day and plan a time with them. This allows them time to mentally prepare and doesn't blindsides them if they had plans to make a TikTok video or chat with a friend. Next, thoughtfully choose a location thoughtfully. If possible, choose a place where other productive conversations have happened, such as the family room or kitchen table. (Snacks are also never a bad idea!)

#### **Embrace discomfort!**

Meaningful personal growth happens when we are uncomfortable. Discomfort does not mean we have failed or discouraged further conversation. It means we are doing it right!

\*Discomfort is different from anxiety or panic. If your youth is prone to those conditions or is showing symptoms, stop the discussion and attend to their mental health needs.

#### **Keep the questions open-ended.**

We often try to make things easier by turning questions into a yes/no or multiple-choice response. While it might make the questions easier, it does not encourage deeper discussion. If you do this accidentally, or decide to start with this format, make sure to follow up with questions/statements like "Tell me more about..." or "what prompted that answer?" (Avoid using the word "why" as it can feel confrontational, even if it isn't intended that way.) Let your youth's curiosity guide the conversation.

#### **Validate thoughts and feelings.**

There is no right or wrong way to think or feel. Thoughts and feelings are just things; they don't necessarily have larger implications. Even if we don't share the same thoughts or feelings, or if we don't understand how they

got there, you can still practice validation. Validating simply expresses that you hear them, their words are important, their thoughts and feelings are real, and they as people are worth your time and compassion.

#### **Be brave enough to say "I don't know."**

Sometimes parents believe that in order to have a good discussion with their youth, they have to have ALL the answers. This is not true! This belief can make parents want to avoid tough conversations with youth all together. Be brave and admit when you don't know something. You can then research it together. In addition, you now have the added bonus of getting to model humility and ongoing learning. We will always be life-long learners!

#### **Prepare.**

Read the questions ahead of time and choose the questions that are appropriate for your youth. Don't omit questions out of fear, but rather decide if questions or topics are fruitful given your youth's personality, history, and temperament. In other words, make this discussion guide work for you!

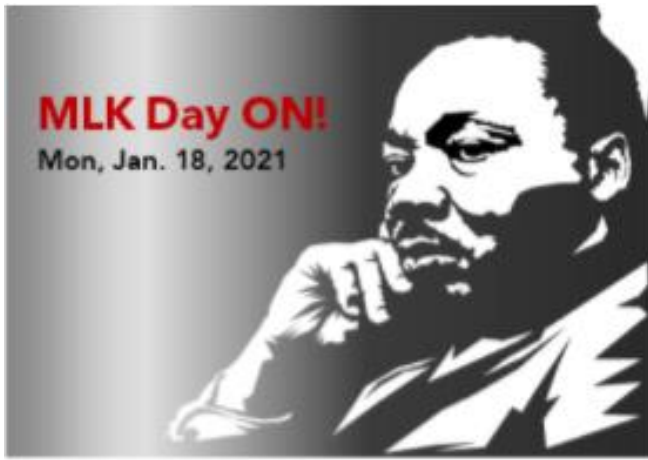
#### **Go off script!**

These questions are prompts, which means they are designed to help you start a meaningful conversation. Feel free to ask follow-up questions and let the conversation go where it needs to go. If you end up going off-script, you are doing it right!

#### **End it thoughtfully.**

Attention spans for youth are shorter than adults. If you notice that they start to get fidgety or distracted after you've been talking for a while, wrap up the conversation, even if you haven't talked about everything you wanted to. You can always pick up the conversation another day!





### Discussion Prompts

1. What stood out to you from the gatherings today?
2. What do you know about Martin Luther King Jr?
3. Why do you think our church spent the day offering MLK activities?
4. What racial inequalities are you familiar with?
5. Have you personally observed racial inequality? What did you see?
6. What have you heard about present day racial justice advocates?
  - a. How do you feel about the actions of these advocates?
7. How do you feel about the racial inequality in our world?
8. How do you think God feels about the racial inequality in our world?
9. What would a world with racial equity look like?
10. What can we do as individuals and as a family to help bring about racial equity?
11. Close in prayer. (Take turns if no one person feels comfortable leading it.)