

Lenten Small Group Discussion Guide

About this Guide

This discussion guide offers readers a chance to process the ideas Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg raises in her book, *On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World* (Beacon Press, 2022), and to reflect more deeply on them.

Each chapter contains some general questions about the book, found the On Repentance and Repair discussion guide created by the author, and some additional questions and framings are from questions created by Rev. Molly Baskette, author of *How to Begin When Your World Is Ending: A Spiritual Field Guide to Joy Despite Everything* (Broadleaf Books, 2022) who wrote questions for a Christian audience in collaboration with Rabbi Ruttenberg. Both have been adapted for use in our congregation.

Suggestions for Group Discussion:

Establish a sense of connection and ritual for each session. Begin by having each participant introduce themselves and share one word at the beginning of each discussion that reflects how they are feeling coming into small group that day...something they're holding, excited about, feeling, resonating with, apprehensive about, challenged by, or anything else.

Since this book in particular touches on sensitive issues and may invite personal reflection or discussion of harms experienced or committed, it is wise to begin the conversation by stating general guidelines for your time together. We suggest the following, and you may want to add your own:

- Our goal is to reflect on our own experiences and the experiences of others, not to make judgments. We will remember that we can

never truly know another's experience. We will provide warnings for any possibly triggering topics. No group member will be obligated to provide an explanation for excusing themselves from a conversation or passing on a question.

- We will keep an open mind to better learn from one another.
- What is said in this conversation stays in this conversation, and may not be repeated outside it. Our aim is to create a space where we can hear each other and understand ourselves, not to give advice or to argue ideas of objective truth. With that in mind, in this conversation we will agree to speak in the first-person, about our own truth.
- We will assume good faith in one another.
- We will practice respect and open-mindedness when learning from one another. We won't rush to fill the silence.

A Note from Rev. Baskette:

Christianity has a long and ugly history not only of anti-semitism, but its theological kin, supercessionism: the idea that Jesus and the Christian church somehow fulfill, make inviolate and/or "supercede" the Jewish sacred texts, history, ethics and tradition.

In reality, the Hebrew Scriptures comprise the vast majority of the Christian Bible—more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of our sacred texts. Any responsible follower of Jesus, himself Jewish, will want to understand the texts and context that shaped his thinking, teaching and living.

Jesus speaks quite a bit about sin, judgment, repentance and forgiveness. How do we understand his teachings in light of his religion? Rabbi Rutenberg gives a modern read of the 5 steps that medieval philosopher Maimonides, thinking and living 1,000 years after Jesus, offered for repentance and repair. The

supplemental questions add an additional lens to the dialogue—some new bits for the kaleidoscope of conversation.

This addendum is not meant to pull focus from Danya Ruttenberg's main ideas, nor is it intended to be exhaustive. Doubtless these questions will raise even more questions! Hopefully they will spur you to challenge some ossified assumptions and tropes of Christian theology—including calling out the harm Christianity itself has done and continues to do. We can call our own tradition to repentance, open it up to healthy scrutiny, and at the same time nourish a Christian faith that is actually braver, truer and more healing for us as individuals, our communities and the world.