



# Life Relationship Notes

For your own copy visit [www.liferelationships.com](http://www.liferelationships.com)

## Dr. John Perkins and Racial Reconciliation

John Perkins's remarkable life story began in rural, segregated Mississippi, where his father disappeared and his mother died shortly after his birth. Raised by tough, bootlegging relatives, he never finished elementary school. As a teenager, he held his dying brother Clyde in his arms after a trigger-happy police officer shot him, a decorated serviceman just back from World War II.

Relatives urged an angry Perkins to leave town before he got shot himself. In 1947, they helped him go west to Southern California, where he landed a job in a foundry. A self-confessed workaholic, he prospered as he advanced from one job to another. Soon he owned his own home, where he and Vera Mae began to raise their children.

Perkins had never thought much of religion. "It was hard for me to see how all that shouting and bench turning I saw in black churches was giving people any kind of incentive to develop," he recounts in his autobiography, *Let Justice Roll Down*. But his oldest son, Spencer, began to attend a neighborhood church and talked his parents into going. After considerable investigation—Bible reading, particularly—Perkins accepted Christ. Soon he was using every minute of his free time to study the Bible, teach Bible classes, or witness to his faith.

Though leery of some aspects of the civil-rights movement, Perkins began to register voters, trying to influence local elections. That brought threats and opposition from the white community. Perkins helped organize co-ops throughout the South. He launched a health clinic. When local black churches kept a distance from his ministry, he started a church of his own. At one point, after he led a boycott of local white businesses, police arrested and badly beat him.

Perkins depended on support from conservative Christians back in Southern California, who found it hard to understand how a ministry of Bible teaching and evangelism had become a source of political agitation and violence. Through trial and error, he developed a philosophy of ministry to the poor, and in the process of explaining it to supporters and volunteers, he boiled the philosophy down to three "R's".

---

Reconciliation - He firmly believes that the kingdom of God is seen when all ethnicities work and worship together. "I want to preach a gospel that is stronger than my race and stronger than my economic interest."

Relocation - Emphasizes that to work with the poor you have to live with them. "I believe that the people with the problems can solve their own problems," Perkins says. Only those who share daily life in the ghetto can move past charity to genuine community development.

Redistribution – Perkins believes one should seek economic vitality, not hand-outs. He recognizes that external forces—unjust laws, lack of access to bank loans, poor schools—often prevent economic progress among poor people. One way or another, economic resources must change hands so that the poor can gain economic power and dignity. Giving a person a handout is easy. Dedicating yourself to helping people develop every area of their lives, especially people facing the temptations and risks in a poor urban environment, is to fall to the ground and die so that we may be raised to new life.

### Opportunities to hear Dr. Perkins's Story:

Special Chapel Monday Jan. 21 @ 10 am

Talk Back Session Jan. 21 at 4-5 pm in the Honors Center

co-hosted by African Heritage Group and Honors Scholar Program

Chapel Tuesday Jan. 22 @ 10:30 am