

## “Race and Reconciliation”

*Ephesians 2:11-21*

### Introduction

We live in a time of great division with lines drawn in the sand and people separated across political, cultural, social and class boundaries. America’s ugly historical past has plagued our land with the debilitating effects caused by one of the greatest dividers in our country – the sin of racism. Racism is a deeply rooted belief, conscious or not, that one race is superior compared to another. This belief manifests itself in the use of power, influence, resources or communication to reject or oppress people of another ethnicity. This sin of subjugating one group of image-bearers to elevate another is serious in the eyes of the Lord. However, the practice of racism is not unique to our culture or our generation. Example after example of the brokenness of racism is found throughout Scripture.

It can be discouraging to see racism embedding itself within the structures and systems of culture and individual hearts, but even more so, within the walls of the Church. If the people of God can’t seem to love one another in the way God has called them to, it is no wonder that the culture is not being transformed by the example presented by the Church.

In Ephesians, Paul was quick to address this issue of division among the believers at Ephesus. In his letter to this separated body, Paul reminded the people of God’s magnificent grace and how each person was the Lord’s workmanship, redeemed by Christ Himself. From grace, Paul moves to race and the importance of redeemed people to first seek reconciliation to one another across racial divides. As they wrestled through their differences between Jews and Gentiles, Paul reminded the people of God that our common ground can be found through the work of Christ. In places where there is racial conflict in the body, Jesus seeks to make something new. As Paul wrote, “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall” (Eph 2:14).

The question becomes this: how do we approach this issue of race from a kingdom mindset? It requires each of us, no matter our ethnicity, to view ourselves first as Christians. We aren’t to ignore or lose our racial identity, but as Paul encourages the Ephesians, it is no longer our point of reference for our experiences with one another or our view of ourselves. While we change our orientation to reflect our new identity in Christ, we must also be quick to address the issue of racism within our hearts, our communities and our churches. As ambassadors of Jesus – representatives of the Son – our primary ministry is to be people of reconciliation, addressing the sins that cause division while reconciling people to Christ and to one another.

### Getting Started

1. What have been some of the impacts of racism in America? Why does God hate the sin of racism?
2. Why do you think God’s Word points out so many examples of racial discord throughout Scripture? Why do you think people struggle to treat one another equally across political, cultural, social, class and racial lines?

### Let’s Get Personal

1. What has been your personal experience with racism? How have you experienced it personally or witnessed it in your community?
  2. Have you ever found yourself first identifying with your race or another divisional line (political, cultural or social) instead of in Christ? Why do you think we can tend to view our experiences and others through specific lenses instead of choosing to find our primary identity and perspective in Jesus?
  3. What do you think the Church needs to do collectively and on an individual level to help transform our culture and encourage racial reconciliation and healing?
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4. How can we address racism as individuals? What have you found effective when pushing back against sinful ideologies, rhetoric and practices that cultivate racism?

#### Take the Next Step

1. In what ways is God calling you to be an agent of reconciliation? Discuss two or three actionable steps that you can do as an ambassador of Christ to fight the sin of racism and promote healing across racial lines.
2. What are some specific ways you can commit to pray this week to improve racial reconciliation in America?
3. How can you model the Kingdom of heaven on earth? Do your relationships reflect the diversity of heaven? How can you be intentional in seeking relationships across division lines?
4. Do you struggle with the sin of racism? Do you struggle with a heart of unforgiveness towards those who have mistreated you? Be open and honest and confess your sin to the Lord and seek forgiveness.
5. Want to dig deeper? Take a look at the following passages: Numbers 12:1; Ephesians 2:10; Galatians 2:11, 20; Colossians 1:19-23; Acts 17:26; Romans 16:17; John 17:24, 2 Corinthians 5:16-18; and Revelation 7:9.

#### Renew Your Mind

*“So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, . . .”*

*Ephesians 2:19-20*

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