

# 10 Draft Biblical Perspectives for a Church on Race

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This 10-point summary is to serve as introductory guide to help us examine our lives and seek God and help create the racial harmony that God desires. A biblical church is ideally a diverse people, reflecting the community in which it is located, where everyone seeks to follow Jesus as King. We want to be free from racial prejudices.

1. WE ARE ALL RECONCILED TO GOD BY LOVE – God loves the world (John 3:16), sending Jesus to die for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). God, in Christ, is reconciling to Himself people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Revelation 5:9). God has made all believers one in Christ, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and uniquely qualified to stand together in faith (Ephesians 2:15–16). The Lord has given His people the mission of making disciples from every ethnic group (Matthew 28:19).

2. WE DESIRE TO BE RECONCILED TO EACH OTHER BY GOD’S LOVE – Jesus both showed us and taught us that love is to be the defining characteristic of disciples (John 13:34-35). We define love as sacrificial actions, following Jesus, for the benefit of others (John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13). Racism, in its various forms, is a violation of love. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Racism is a clear violation of Christian love.

3. WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT RACISM AND DIVISION ARE SINFUL – The devastating reality of sin results in denigration, alienation, and harm to one another. The gospel brings reconciliation not only between God and humanity, but also among estranged groups of people (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14–18; Colossians 3:11). Colossians 3:11 puts it well: “There is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.” All people should be united in Christ. God is forming a new humanity through the church from “every nation, tribe, people and language” (Revelation 7:9).

Acknowledging that racism exists and that there are things that need to change both inside the church (including ourselves) and outside the church is important. We also need to realize and acknowledge how hard this discussion is for our African American brothers and sisters in the church. Black Christians are tired of having to justify the validity and relevance of the conversation in the first place, and are often deeply discouraged by how little their white brothers and sisters seem to have thought or cared about it, or to have realized the dramatic effect racism has had upon their lives. The problem is real. The solution is not easy. Only God and the gospel can prevail.

4. WE SEEK RACIAL RECONCILIATION – We sorrowfully acknowledge of the sins of racial pride—prideful feelings and actions of racial superiority and the consequent dehumanization of other races. Even church leaders like Peter struggled with racism (Acts 15 and Galatians 2:11-13). We repudiate the historic exploitation and cruelty of other human beings in the form of slavery, human trafficking, family destruction, sexual and physical abuse, economic and social discrimination, and segregation. It is the love of God through repenting, confessing, healing, forgiving, and serving that bring reconciliation. It is the repenting of any of lingering, historic, and present attitudes or behaviors

that, left unaddressed, will continue to harm others due to differences in race, ethnicity, and race culture.

5. WE SEEK RACIAL INTEGRATION – In the life of the local church, we desire to include ethnically diverse people, to reflect, where possible, both the diverse composition of our community and the future diverse composition of God’s people in eternity (Revelation 7:9). Diverse backgrounds often require an attitude change. We must deny ourselves and choose to become like Jesus and take the form of a servant to each other. It requires mutual understanding and the learning of new cultures and backgrounds. It is not simply the sitting together in one pew, but our life together in friendship, fellowship, and partnership in the cause of the gospel, shoulder to shoulder in the cause of justice, heart-to-heart in the application of mercy.

6. WE SEEK TO LEARN TOGETHER – Our tendency is usually to be slow to listen and quick to defend ourselves, which is the opposite of what the Bible says (James 1:19). We want to listen and learn from our African American, Latino, Asian or other ethnic brothers and sisters in Christ – as they too should listen to their Caucasian brothers and sisters. We should all read, ask questions, listen, and ask God for the ability to consider what each other has to say with an open mind. Racism appears in beliefs or practices that distinguish or elevate one race over others or when we hold a lack of forgiveness for the other. When accompanied and sustained by imbalances of power, prejudice moves beyond individual relationships to institutional practices.

We are concerned about human philosophies that do not depend on the teachings of Jesus (Colossians 2:6-8). We acknowledge the systemic perpetuation of racism, but we reject the philosophical systems of Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory as contrary to Scripture. We are compelled to point out the dangers of this neo-Marxist, atheistic worldview, as it appears in its many forms today.

At the same time, systems and structures have unfairly benefited some and burdened others simply due to the color of their skin and the cultural associations based upon perceptions of race. We encourage one another to understand more fully the historical and contemporary facets of racism in our country: the tragic mistreatment of Native Americans, the expressions of anti-Semitism, the impact of slavery and segregation on African Americans, the exploitation of Hispanic Americans and other immigrants, the exclusion and internment of Asian Americans, cultural beliefs about white racial superiority with respect to ethnic or racial minorities, and more. These have created and reinforced complex economic disparities and social inequalities. We seek an end to racial injustice by advocating for Jesus Christ and the teachings of Scripture.

7. WE WILL ACKNOWLEDGE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY – We are all responsible for our personal decisions and actions (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10-19; Revelation 20: 11-15). Systems and power structures that have racial imbalances and oppressive systems can make it very hard to live our lives as God intends. But we cannot shirk our responsibility to pursue the better way. Neither can we abandon people to communities and systems that are oppressive and harmful. We must do all we can to help those trapped in such systems. At the same time, God calls us all to personal as found in the way of Jesus, virtues like love, forgiveness, patience – along with hard work, discipline, and the path of wisdom (e.g., see the Book of Proverbs).

8. WE SEEK RELATIONSHIPS – We seek to pursue friendships with people that are different from us (1 Peter 4:8; 1 Cor. 13:1-13). This has to be intentional, because we don’t naturally

gravitate toward people that are different from us. We will look for ways to connect with those of other races around us or deepen friendships with those we already know. We will seek to regularly invite families over for dinner, set up play dates for our kids, and invite each other out to lunch.

9. WE COMMIT TO DEMONSTRATE LOVE – We seek a deep commitment to listening to each other, even when it is hard (Romans 12:12-21). When it comes to difficult conversations, our level of “offendability” often reveals the level of our maturity. If we cannot have uncomfortable conversations, we are not going to get very far. Reconciliation requires us to listen deeply to one another. As has been said, “To listen to another’s soul may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another.”

Following the Spirit of Jesus, the ones who need to listen first and more often are the ones who have enjoyed the privileges of power and may lack understanding of the wounds of those who do not. This does not mean that people of color do not need to listen as well - we all need to listen to each other. Yet the order is often very important. There must be an intentional humility and turning from postures that may be found intimidating (both ways). This is the way of the cross. We will hold each other accountable for the jokes we tell, attitudes we have, assumptions we make, and the way we discuss political and social issues involving race. We can provide support, resources, and discipleship to ethnic minority ministries, church plants, missionaries, and leaders.

10. WE WILL PRAY – Praying is the most powerful thing we can do (James 4:1-2; Matthew 21:22). We will have neither the ability nor the desire to fully enter into this conversation without the grace of God powerfully at work in us. The racial hostility in our world is so deep we would be mistaken that we can make significant progress without deep spirituality of prayer. There are principalities and powers at work in the world (Ephesians 6:10-18).

The church is in desperate need of reimagining of prayer on two fronts, namely, personal prayer and congregational prayer. At one point in the Gospels, Jesus said to his disciples, “This [demon] can only come out by prayer” (Matthew 9:29). When it comes to this evil power of racial hostility, the same principle applies.

Finally, reconciliation requires regular confession, repentance, and forgiveness. We come together as deeply broken and frail people—on this vital issue and so many other vital issues. We desperately need God’s wisdom and courage to pursue love and reconciliation.