



MAKING A PLACE FOR YOU

The Scriptures declare that we have all been adopted by God into His family through the new birth. (See John 3:5; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5.) Scripture also states emphatically that “By one Spirit we are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (I Corinthians 12:13). These Scriptures teach us that the Lord is no respecter of persons. He adopts people into the church family from all cultures and ethnic backgrounds, and one is not valued more than another. This is why we are commanded to preach the Gospel to *every creature*.

Racial prejudice, hatred, and a party, or divisive, spirit will keep us from accomplishing this mission and, therefore, have *no place* in the local assembly. These sins are inconsistent with the truth of the Gospel and must be boldly and lovingly confronted and universally denounced as unrighteous living. Only then can we fully accomplish the great commission and reach *all* the diverse people of our community.

I strongly believe that a healthy church free of racial prejudice and bigotry should be a reflection of the entire community. I am sure all of us appreciate the rich diversity of ethnicities in Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County. It is my desire and vision to see them all well represented in Solid Rock Church. Unfortunately, there are evil forces at work in these

last days; they are rising up across our nation igniting again the fires of hatred, prejudice, and violence. These tensions could escalate during the coming elections.

As true children of God and disciples of Jesus Christ, we must resist the temptation to be drawn into these movements no matter how others may justify themselves. We must be intentional in our efforts to

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overcome any appearance of racism, prejudice, or bigotry by making a deliberate effort toward inclusion. We must also take a firm, open stand against *all* divisive speech or behavior. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thessalonians 5:21-22).

In conclusion, I hope that we can all recognize that the need for inclusion is a basic human need that must not be ignored in order for harmony to be maintained. Please join with me and renew your commitment to operate in harmony, unity, and love, ensuring inclusion at all levels of our organization and in every area of fellowship. I pray that the Lord keeps us undefiled and Christ-like through these last days until His coming. May He bless this nation and our local community with great revival during these troublesome and difficult times!

Grace and peace be multiplied to all,
Pastor

The Sin of Prejudice

by Pastor Kyle Turner

I've heard it said that it is human nature to notice differences, but *prejudice* is when we draw conclusions based upon those perceived differences. It might surprise many to know that the word prejudice is not in most English translations of the Bible. One then might ask if this very important issue is discussed in Scripture. While the word is absent, the topic is addressed, and God is very clear regarding how He feels about it.

The term used in Scripture is *respect of persons*, and James 2:1-13 gives us a very keen understanding of God's position on the issue. The Greek word used in Scripture is *prosōpolēptēs*, meaning "to show partiality or to accept or receive the face of someone." The literal sense in Greek was to accept one's external appearance as the real thing and to make an evaluation on that basis. The application is this: when we evaluate someone based solely on their external appearance, i.e., their skin color, we are guilty of respecting persons, or prejudice. James 2:9 says plainly that this is sin.

God is not prejudice. This statement may sound overly simplistic, but that does not diminish its veracity.

Romans 2:11 says "there is no respect of persons with God." God's evaluation of someone is not skin-deep, so to speak. In fact, when directing the prophet Samuel to select a new king for Israel, God revealed something about Himself and, in so doing, contrasted Himself with humanity. God said He "...does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (I Samuel 16:7, *New King James Version*).

The solution for prejudice is the same as for all sin: one must repent and ask God for forgiveness. After repentance, we would do well to look at the verse of Scripture immediately preceding James 2:9 where God labels prejudice as sin. James 2:8 provides the vehicle by which prejudice is overcome. It reads, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well" (NKJV). God, the only being in existence who is not susceptible to the sin of prejudice, can forgive us of our failings, and He can shed His love abroad in our hearts that we may truly love our neighbor with sincerity and purity, regardless of what they look like.

Defined by Love

by Sis. Ona Burmeister

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:17-18, *New International Version*).

There have been many issues of race throughout the years. My first account of someone reacting to my race in a negative manner occurred at a young age. Being both African American and Caucasian, I was born into two quite distinct cultures. I found myself confused as to who I was and what defined me. Both cultures have always looked at me to define who I was; I felt pressured to choose a side, yet I am African American and I am Caucasian. I have no desire to choose between the two.

I have found that race should not be overlooked but embraced. In the house of God I am of one culture, one family, and we all share one Father. While we all have our differences, I am proud to be

who I am. We all bring different qualities to the table and have our part in the house of God.

I am aware not everyone shares the same views. I have been defined as *different* and even as far as *trash*. Those things I am not, but what I am is loved! I am loved by an African American family who greets me with big hugs and exclamations of joy when they see me. I am loved by a Caucasian family who greets me with kind words of love and encouragement. While they both do those things in their own way, nothing compares to the feeling of being in the arms of Jesus. He is the Father we share, the reason we are a family.

So while this world may try to judge me on sight, I want to challenge myself to embrace every difference I bring to the table and use it to further God's kingdom. I pray we can all love each other and see each other through God's eyes. I am a child of God, I am made in His image, and I am, above all, loved unconditionally.

New Godly Culture

by Dr. Shadi Azar

When my family and I moved from Jordan in the Middle East to Ann Arbor nine years ago, we experienced a cultural shock. We had no family around us, and everything we heard and saw was strange to us. After we joined Solid Rock Church, we told our parents that we had found a church family.

Our new birth experience, specifically being baptized with the Holy Spirit, ushered us into the culture of Jesus. It was similar to what happened to the Jews from many nations and cultures on the day of *Shavu'ot*. They were pilgrims to Jerusalem for the *Feast of Weeks*, which commemorates the anniversary of the day God gave them the *Torah* or "Law." Three thousand of them, from at least 13 cultures mentioned in Acts 2:9-11, joined the church.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that day was not a coincidence. God was saying something. Those humans, who shared Adam as a father, now shared the Lord Jesus Christ as their heavenly Father. We all belong to one family with a godly culture, sharing the same values, purpose, beliefs,

interests, and even language. The new birth gave us a new language or tongue (Acts 10:46). The final authority for God's children on social and cultural issues is the Word of their heavenly Father. He already judged what is right and wrong. He clearly teaches us how to deal with people and governments, how to worship Him, how to pray, and how to be a conduit for His love and power.

It was the Lord's plan for a diverse human race, but it was not His plan to commune with His children in groups based on race or nationality, or even language. He specifically commissioned His disciples to proclaim the Gospel to *all creation* (Mark 16:15, *New International Version*).

Some think it is reasonable for people from similar cultures to join a congregation that shares their race, food, dress, and traditions. If we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, purchased by His blood (Revelation 5:9), then we should do what is pleasing to the Lord in how we worship, praise, pray, dress, talk, and even think. This is our heavenly culture; it eliminates our earthly differences and makes us feel like we're home in Solid Rock Church of Ann Arbor.

A look back at October



Youth Chorale's First Performance



Brother Mike McGurk