

Elephant in the Room

Part 4—Pride and Prejudice: How Bigotry, Discrimination, and Racism Are Ripping Us Apart!

Ephesians 2:11-16 (sel.)—¹¹Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision . . . ¹². . . You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel . . . ¹³. . . you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. ¹⁵. . . He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. ¹⁶Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. (NLT)

1. What Is Racism?

- Racism:
 - The belief that each race or ethnic group possesses specific characteristics, abilities, or qualities that distinguish it as inferior or superior to another such group
 - Discrimination against or antagonism towards other races or ethnic groups based on such a belief
- Expressions of racism:
 - _____: Proud . . .
 - _____: Outsiders . . . excluded . . . far away
 - _____: You were called . . .

- _____: Walls of hostility . . .

2. How to Overcome Divisiveness.

- Check your . . .
 - _____

Romans 12:2a—²Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think . . . (NLT)

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Proverbs 21:23—²³If you want to stay out of trouble, be careful what you say. (GNB)

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Matthew 5:44—⁴⁴But I say, love your enemies Pray for those who persecute you!" (NLT)

Matthew 6:14-15—¹⁴If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins. (NLT)

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Titus 3:10—¹⁰If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them. (NLT)

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1 John 4:20—²⁰Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their

brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. (NIV)

Action Step . . .

- Build a bridge of love!

1 John 3:18b—18. . . let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them and show it by our actions. (TLB)

- Heavenly Father, Creator of all people, forgive us for our foolish pride, our irrational fear, our baseless ignorance, and our evil prejudice. We have sinned by criticizing cultures instead of valuing their differences. We have sinned when we have harbored a smug sense of superiority instead of humbling ourselves at the foot of the cross. We have sinned by using labels to put people down when we should have shared truths that would have set them free. We have sinned by erecting walls when we should have built bridges. Lord, you expressed your love for diversity by making us all different. Help us to value every person the way Jesus did. Search our hearts and give us the courage to confront the evil of racism dwelling within ourselves. Open our minds to understand Your truth. Close our mouths when we would say words that wound our brother and sister. Stretch out our hands to embrace those the world has told us to hate. Jesus, may we be the change our world so desperately needs. Amen.