

I am Free to Serve!

Racism: “Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group.”

Acts 17:26, “From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.”

1 Corinthians 13:12, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Racism is a heart issue and as we grow in Christ our love for all people increases. This morning I want to talk about four other big cultural/racial issues that I suspect many of you have questions about. However, we are going to talk about each issue for 7 minutes. Our goal is not to answer all your questions about each topic. Our goal is not to say who is right or who is wrong. Our goal is unity by focusing on what we can agree on and how the scripture helps us to respond biblically to these issues. I want us to be able to love each other, to worship, grow, and serve together despite our differences of opinion. I have also asked TJ and his lovely wife Ty to join me for this discussion so will you join me in welcoming them.

1. **Why doesn't Jesus or the NT outright condemn many of the brutal and immoral practices of the Roman Empire?**

- a. The Bible generally focuses on the behavior of His people and promises that when we pursue Him then He will act on our behalf even by influencing governments and world leaders. The Bible is full of examples of this. **2 Chronicles 7:14,** “If my people...
- b. God understands that cultural change begins in the heart. As God changes us, culture changes. As the church becomes more like Jesus, we become salt and light in our world. The American church, in a lot of ways, has lost its saltiness.
- c. Sometimes our suffering is the fruit of our sin. Israel is suffering in the first century because Israel turned her back on God. There is a period of 400 years between the Old and New Testaments where God is silent and allows Israel to have what she wants, life without God serving false Gods.

2. **What about white privilege?** I believe we all have privilege and we all have barriers.

- a. TJ and I have talked a little about this. I am white but growing up TJ was more privileged than I was. He grew up with two great parents. His dad was a military man and engineer. His mom was a business woman. TJ's grandfather went to Duke. My grandfather had an 8th grade education, my dad never went to college, and my parents were married in High School and in Lumberton. TJ grew up in a great family, a great church, got a great education, and is smarter than most. I grew up with a single mom, lived on welfare for years, moved every couple years, was not in church until my teenage years, had to work all the time, was sexually abused, picked on a lot, and did poorly in school.
- b. The danger is believing color is the only privilege or thinking that this one factor prevents a person of color from succeeding. We have lots of successful black men and women in our church.

- c. Often our struggles become the secret to our success. When I look at my life and ministry today what I do and what I will spend the rest of my life doing is the fruit of my struggles, suffering, and pain. Today, I am grateful for how God worked in my struggles to build my character. If life is too easy it becomes a handicap. Trials build character which empowers us to succeed.
 - d. **Booker T. Washington- *Up From Slavery***
 - e. **Abuse is when someone convinces a person or group of people that you are weak and powerless over your future. You cannot make it without my help. The goal is to tear down a person's worth and esteem in order to manipulate him or her into compliance.**
The Bible says: God created us, in His image, all of us. We all have value. God wants us to partner with us to create our future. Again, God, not the government, my circumstances, or a man hold my future. The Bible teaches me over and over again, if I will walk with God, He will bless every area of my life. This is what the church must teach people to do.
3. **What about systemic racism.** We need to acknowledge this has been an ugly part of American history. Today, systemic racism or racial discrimination is illegal, which is good. If we discover racism or discrimination, we should expose it and fix it. We need to do our best to provide equal opportunity to everyone.
- a. Just because we do not have equal outcomes does not mean racism is to blame. Inequality in outcomes is influenced by many different complicated issues.
 - b. **Illustrate:** All the kids are raised the same home but they did not achieve the same things.
4. **What about police officers and black Americans?** Any time a person is killed, even one person, it is tragic. So, we do not want to be insensitive to anyone's pain. When it comes to policing in America, we need to work to get rid of bad cops and make sure good cops have the training and support they need. I believe what we have been through the last couple of years has exposed some things and forcing us to do a better job of treating everyone fairly.
- a. **Let's not let the media divide us.** Let's work together. Media's goal is to get us all mad at each other. Our goal should be to figure out how we can work together.
 - b. Let's look at the actual numbers.
 - i. Number of officers- 800,000
 - ii. Number of arrests each year- 10,000,000
 - iii. In 2019, USA Today reports that 25 unarmed black men were killed by police.
 - iv. 800,000 officers, making 10,000,000 arrest. A person's chance at being killed by a police officer is .0000025 or 1 in 403,000.
 - v. Look at this chart. Compare your chances of being killed by a cop.
 - c. Police, like every other profession, are imperfect. We need to keep getting rid of the bad cops and keep training and supporting the good cops.

Why is it important to talk about this stuff?

- So, we can grow in our capacity to love each other well
- So, you understand why I do not preach on the latest injustice that happens. The best contribution we can make is to help people be with Jesus, become like Jesus, so we can do what Jesus did.