

*How Should the Church Deal
with the Cultural Conflict Regarding*

RACISM?

BY KENNETH STEWART

MERRIAM-WEBSTER DEFINES RACISM AS “a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.” Racism as defined by Christianity is sin and is in direct violation of the Word of God. For the church to deal with racism properly, we must first acknowledge it as sin. The church knows how to deal with sin: sin must be exposed, confronted, and defeated at any cost or else it will fester under the surface. Any sin that is not exposed and dealt with will begin to destroy the pillars of the church and society. When racism is not viewed as sin, it becomes difficult for the church to understand how and why this attitude must be addressed.

Recent incidents of racial conflict have highlighted some underlying issues in our society. These issues give the United Pentecostal Church an unprecedented opportunity to be a light and a witness to our communities and a catalyst for revival and unity. The United Pentecostal Church has approximately 40 percent membership of var-

ious ethnic groups across the United States. This allows us to set an example for our nation of unity among all races and groups, which demonstrates the love of God for all. If we will make a forceful stand against racism as the sin it is and communicate to our communities the unifying message of the gospel, we can be a force for revival in these last days in all our communities.

Below are three scriptural principles to assist us in exposing and defeating racism.

1. Racism is polygenic; Scripture is monogenic.

The underlying principle of racism is that one race is superior to another, which would mean that humans evolved from several independent pairs of ancestors (polygenesis). Scripture plainly teaches we are all descended from the same pair of ancestors (monogenesis). Acts 17:26 states, “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.”

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Since we are all descended from one common ancestor, we share a common genetic structure, which means one race cannot be superior to another.

2. Racism gives more respect to one race or group.

Scripture teaches all races should receive the same respect. A clear sign of racism is to give more respect to someone based merely upon their race, which violates Scripture. The Scripture states in Romans 2:11, “For there is no respect of persons with God.” As Christians, we must learn to be like God and consider the inward man, not the outer physical appearance (1 Samuel 16:7). Our carnal nature tends to be drawn to people who look like us and have similar backgrounds. However, once we are saved and become a new creature in the image of God, we must look at others without respect to persons. If we disregard this command, then James 2:9 warns we are committing a sin: “But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin.”

3. Racism is a result of our sinful nature; our new nature rejects that attitude.

Children are born without prejudice but our sinful nature, our society, and our upbringing can lead to separation by race or culture. In the New Testament, the culture was separated by ethnicity, language, and status in life. Therefore, it was revolutionary for Paul to write in Colossians 3:10–11, “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” This passage makes it clear that after we are saved and made in the image of God, we can no longer view others with the discriminating lens of society or our old nature. This is why coming together as brothers and sisters in the family of God sends a powerful message of love and unity to our communities for revival.

Additionally, it is not enough for us to simply reject racism as sin and thus feel we are not a part of that problem as our responsibility stops there. The best example of that is found in John 4 when Jesus ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well. Jewish people looked

down on Samaritans and referred to them in derogatory terms. Jesus did not; He went out of His way to meet the woman in her moment of need (John 4:4). However, when Jesus first spoke to her she responded negatively. She thought that He, as a Jew, was viewing her through a racial lens. In reality, she was the one with the problem, so Jesus had to overcome her attitude toward Him in order to form a connection and minister to her needs.

We must look for ways to overcome the perceptions of others in this divisive world. Jesus’ example in reaching the woman at the well shows us that we must be proactive in reaching out to others that may feel marginalized by society. We do this by showing love, ministering to everyone we meet, and giving everyone the same opportunity to receive the gospel. We also must be mindful in presenting our worldviews that we base everything on Scripture and not our personal preferences or political leanings. Failure to do so can drive a wedge between you and others. We also must be aware that many times before someone visits our churches they check our social media postings. If they perceive any bias by what we post or repost, that may also prevent them from visiting our churches.

Acts 1:8 gives us the formula for reaching the entire world with the gospel by the power of the Holy Ghost. It contains a command to reach Samaria, which represents the marginalized and those who are disdained by society. Until we learn from Christ’s example of going through Samaria to form connections and win souls, we will be unable to fulfill the Great Commission and have the worldwide revival that God wants us to have. John wrote in 1 John 4:20 that we cannot say we love God without loving His creation; if people hate the brother they can see, then they cannot love God whom they cannot not see! 📌

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