



**Topic: How do Christians respond to racism in our society?**

- Clarify biblical understanding of justice and racism
- Provide a biblical response for how to engage people and the culture with both Jesus' truth and love
- Host an open, safe Q&A time

**Biblical Definitions:**

Why are we talking about a social issue as a gospel-centered church?

1. Justice: To set things right; a reflection of God's holy character
  - a. God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4; **Psalm 89:14**; Amos 5:6-7; Acts 17:31)
    - i. He is personally & particularly concerned about protecting the weak from the strong (Deuteronomy 10:17-18; **Psalm 146:5-9**)
  - b. God calls His people to reflect His justice in our present world (Psalm 82:2-4; Isaiah 1:17; **Micah 6:8**; Luke 11:42)
    - i. The fair & just use of power, especially to protect the weak from the strong
    - ii. Outward treatment toward oppressed & suffering people reflects the inward heart toward God; practical justice is a reflection of spiritual worship (Isaiah 1:11-17; Isaiah 58; Amos 5:21-24; Matthew 25:31-46; **James 2:14-17**)
    - iii. It is biblical to not only seek spiritual freedom, but physical freedom from oppression as a reflection of the gospel (e.g., Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt in Exodus)
  - c. Today, "social justice" often politicized as a partisan word, but biblically, God's people are commanded to be concerned and care for both society and justice
    - i. We don't get to pick and choose the righteousness and justice of God. We should be as concerned for oppressed people as we are about other social issues (e.g., the unborn or marriage).
2. Racism: An irrational belief in the superiority of one's ethnic or racial group, causing hatred of those of another group
  - a. We must see people as God sees them
    - i. (Genesis 1:27; Colossians 3:10) All people are created with equal value and dignity in the image of God
    - ii. God intentionally created diverse races & cultures (Acts 17:26-27), which persists even in eternity (**Revelation 7:9**). Therefore, the gospel doesn't make us "color blind", but appreciative of God's created diversity of people.
  - b. Racism is sin: Despising others made in the image of God is an act of sinful hatred (James 3:8-10), antithetical to the Lord's command to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:29-31)
    - i. "The great evil of American slavery wasn't the involuntary servitude; it was the fiction that black people aren't as good as white people, and aren't the equals of white people, and are less evolved, less human, less capable, less worthy, less deserving than white people." ([Bryan Stevenson](#), Equal Justice Initiative)
  - c. The sin of racism can be complex and subtle in expression
    - i. It's not just overtly oppressive or violent words and behaviors; it also includes discriminatory or preferential beliefs, attitudes, and treatment of a group of people, *particularly the disadvantaged or marginalized*. (**James 2:1-13, particularly verses 8-9**)
    - ii. "Racism has undergone a recent resurgence with an increase in violence evidenced by racial confrontations, numerous racially biased crimes, the increased visibility and boldness of hate groups... *Racism is also present in more subtle and passive forms* in institutional settings where systems of discrimination prevent the upward mobility of gifted and qualified individuals. It is also present in racially discriminatory housing patterns, in the neglect and avoidance of people who are racially different, in the use of racially offensive language and humor, and at the level of individual prejudices and biases which heighten tension and perpetuate misunderstanding between racially different people... Inequalities of economic and political resources, and competition for economic and political advantage often causes [racism] to surface."
3. We as a church, unequivocally denounce the sin of racism, believing all people are created equal, with dignity, in the image of God.

**Specific Issue:**

1. Is lethal use of police force against Black Americans really an issue?
  - a. [2019 data on all police killings](#): Black Americans 2.5 times more likely to die from police than White Americans, YET 1.5 times more likely to be unarmed before their death.
  - b. [Overwhelming Evidence](#) that Black Americans also suffer disproportionate disparities of presumed guilt and biased treatment in experiencing: racial profiling and over-policing (e.g., being stopped unwarranted), excessive non-lethal force,

greater likelihood of arrest for misdemeanors & petty crimes, and legal inequities in the criminal justice system (e.g., more severe sentencing and imprisonment) in comparison to White Americans.

- c. Systemic racism: Systems & institutions that produce racially disparate outcomes, regardless of the intentions of people who work within them.

### **Biblical Responses:**

1. Awareness: Jesus and His people deal with truth (John 14:6; 16:7-13). Educate ourselves about the realities of racism
  - a. As an ambassador of the gospel, meet people where they are (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) by listening to and understanding Black friends' personal experiences
  - b. Learn about the history of modern day racism: "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness"
    - i. People can twist statistics about crime or Black Americans to fit different agendas (confusing cause and effect), but a historical overview of the Black experience gives us a clearer picture of systemic racism
  - c. SOLA Network recommended resources: [Top Antiracist Resources for Asian American Christians](#)
2. Acknowledgment & Accountability: Repent of our own racism
  - a. Before we can lovingly confront others about sin, we must deal with the log in our own eye (Matthew 7:4-5)
  - b. Repent of our personal overt and subtle prejudiced beliefs, attitudes, words, actions and inaction
  - c. Pray on behalf of our church and nation in repentance and for Jesus' justice
3. Action: Show Jesus' goodness in your attitudes, words, and actions (Matthew 5:13-16)
  - a. Speak the truth in love to move people toward Jesus (Ephesians 4:15)
    - i. Denounce racism publicly and peacefully
      1. Proclaim Jesus' love, value, and dignity for hurt and oppressed peoples
      2. Don't get distracted or derailed by side issues; focus on the main issue: Racism and violence against Black Americans is unjust
      3. Requires: Don't be afraid or invisible to speak about Jesus & His truth (Matthew 10:26-33)
    - ii. Correct misinformed opinions about Black Americans and racism
      1. Satan loves to sow division and death through lies (John 8:44); God's Spirit works through us to convict with truth (John 16:7-13)
      2. As a follower of Jesus, also point people to the gospel with gentleness & respect (1 Peter 3:15). People do not repent of sin until they meet Jesus
    - iii. Talk with family members about ingrained anti-Black beliefs and attitudes
      1. Connect their own past experiences of prejudice with Black people's experience
      2. Send them a [Letter for Black Lives](#) in their language
    - iv. Consider peaceful protest. We come from a Christian tradition of protest against unbiblical evil (Protestantism)
  - b. Consider donating to well-vetted, transparent, and accountable organizations that are already doing positive work for justice against racism, like the [Equal Justice Initiative](#) (featured in the movie: "Just Mercy")
  - c. Consider being involved in solutions
    - i. Learn about current measures to help reduce violence and injustice against Black people; make your voice and vote heard for policies that make sense, as people of conscience. Some current issues to consider:
      1. How do we train police from "warriors" into "guardians", from escalating to de-escalating?
      2. How do we advocate for the banning of illegal chokeholds, or the mandatory use of body-cams?
      3. How do we help police to succeed by helping them *to focus on the roles they are trained for, rather than roles they are not?* (e.g., mental health, homelessness, drug addiction, social worker issues) Current discussions about defunding police departments does NOT mean eliminating them, but redirecting some of their roles and funds to more appropriately-trained alternatives (e.g., mental health, social workers, etc)
    - ii. Legislation? "I don't want to impose my Christian morals on non-Christians"
      1. Every time people vote, laws legislate someone's morality

### **FAQs:**

1. How should we feel about "Black Lives Matter"?
  - a. What it means: Black Lives Matter Too (NOT Black Lives Matter Only)
    - i. We can biblically agree with the principle without supporting all of the ideology of the BLM Movement: Do Black lives matter to Jesus and to us?
  - b. Don't participate in a tone deaf response: "All Lives Matter"
    - i. (John 15:1-7): In the parable of the Lost Sheep, the point isn't that "All Sheep Matter" (they do!), but Jesus focusing His help on the one that is in danger

2. Why don't Asian Americans seem to have the same experience as Black Americans?
  - a. [Learn the history of the "Model Minority" myth](#): How historical racism against Asians (similar to the Black experience) was reshaped to selectively-recruit highly-educated Asian immigrants, and pit them [against other minorities and minimize systemic racism](#)
  - b. Read "The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority"
    - i. Here's a short visual summary of [The Model Minority Myth](#)
3. How can I support protests when there is also rioting and looting?
  - a. As followers of Jesus, we do not participate in violence and harm to others
  - b. Acknowledge that the majority of protesters are peaceful
    - i. Don't recommit sins of racism by stereotyping an entire group of people as criminal & destructive
    - ii. Recognize that a small percentage of people may commit acts of violence out of human selfishness and sinfulness, distracting from the primary issue and message of protesters for justice against racism
  - c. Understand there are also others who riot because they are hurt, angry, and unheard
    - i. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr (*The Other America*; 1967): "Let me say as I've always said, and I will always continue to say, that riots are socially destructive and self-defeating. I'm still convinced that nonviolence is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom and justice. I feel that violence will only create more social problems than they will solve... But at the same time, it is as necessary for me to be as vigorous in condemning the conditions which cause persons to feel that they must engage in riotous activities as it is for me to condemn riots. I think America must see that riots do not develop out of thin air. Certain conditions continue to exist in our society which must be condemned as vigorously as we condemn riots. But in the final analysis, **a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it that America has failed to hear?** It has failed to hear that the plight of the Negro poor has worsened over the last few years. It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met. And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice, equality, and humanity. And so in a real sense our nation's summers of riots are caused by our nation's winters of delay. And as long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again. Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention"
  - d. Participate in redeeming the situation
    - i. If protesting, redirect others from destructive acts to focus on the main message
    - ii. Support local small businesses
    - iii. Help in clean-up efforts

**Jesus is in the business of saving people, so what destroys people is a gospel issue**