

## Racism and the Church Pt.3

Eradicating racism as a social injustice is not at the heart of the gospel, nor is it the goal of the gospel. But a church that is centered upon the gospel bears the fruit of brotherly love among all races or ethnicities.

In our Biblical Theology of Race Life Group class we are learning what the biblical story tells us about race. It is through this understanding that we can better apply our lives to love mercy, do justly, and walk humbly with our God toward all peoples for the fruit of racial unity.

There are five specifics about what we can do to pursue faith and repentance as a gospel centered church in regard to the fruit of racial unity - **Learn, Pray, Acknowledge, Relate and Commit**. Last week we looked at Prayer.



You can read that article [here](#). The work of the power of the gospel in the church happens through prayer. Praying is the most powerful thing we can do. We will have neither the ability nor the desire to enter into the conversation about racial unity without the grace of God powerfully at work in us. So we must pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven!

### Acknowledge

This week we are considering our need to Acknowledge.

The apostle John wrote,

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8-9)

We all know how difficult it is to acknowledge when we or something we are a part of is wrong. Acknowledgement in regard to the racism that exists in our own hearts, in our churches, and outside of our church in our community requires learning and prayer. By learning what God's pleasure is both in his designs of creation and redemption, and by learning from one another in our culture, we can begin to acknowledge our racism inside ourselves, our church, and outside the church.

Prayer is also a means of grace leading us to acknowledge. Prayer brings us into the presence of God around the Word of God through the Spirit of God. There we are led into all truth, convicted in regard to unrighteousness, and led by grace to humble ourselves before God and man. Before the face of God in prayer is revealed God's pleasure and how we in the world and church are out of accord with his pleasure. Yet in prayer the means of God's grace are given for humility, repentance, faith and love that leads us to acknowledge something we've not seen, or been unwilling to acknowledge. As the psalmist teaches us to pray,

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!  
And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” - Psalm 139:23-24

While we may acknowledge the need to learn and pray, some people may not see the need to do so for the purpose of acknowledging our complicity in regard to racism. The 44th General Assembly of the PCA addressed a pastoral letter to all PCA churches in regard to the matter of racism. In this letter the PCA acknowledges this problem. The pastoral letter says that “acknowledgement doesn't come easy for many evangelical Christians, for a variety of reasons. As we have already noted, many evangelical Christians view today's discussions of racism as just another example of political correctness being foisted on the church... Hence, when the subject is introduced some respond by saying ‘It's time to move on.’ But we also need to realize and acknowledge how hard this discussion is for our African American brothers and sisters in the church. They too, are often ‘tired’ of this

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conversation, but not for the same reason many white evangelical Christians are. Black Christians are ‘tired’ of having to justify the validity and relevance of the conversation in the first place, and are often deeply discouraged by how little their white brothers and sisters seem to have thought or cared about it, or to have realized the dramatic effect racism has had upon their lives... The problem is real. The solution is not easy. Only God and the Gospel can prevail.”

If we do not acknowledge that racism is a problem and we do not aspire to racial reconciliation and Gospel unity, it won’t happen. We can learn all we want, but if we don’t see our sin and need in this area, if we don’t buy in to its importance, if we aren’t ready to make changes, it won’t matter much whatever else we do. But we must also acknowledge what a challenge racial unity is in our churches and communities.

We must acknowledge it is a challenge that can only be met by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The letter from the PCA says, “Even among people with shared Reformed theology, our social and cultural experiences are so different, and our perspectives so varied, that constructive conversation is very difficult on many subjects, especially at first, and requires a long season of trust-building and personal relationship (which leads to our next point). The problem is real. The solution is not easy. Only God and the Gospel can prevail.” Relationships in the church are relationships in the culture of our lives have been and are presently affected by. We can be so simplistic to say, ‘All we need is Jesus, and we’ll all get along.’ All we need is Jesus because he’s reconciling all that is broken in the world to himself through the power of the cross. But we must acknowledge that we’ve been and are a part of the brokenness, and that only in Christ can he make the two one, breaking down the dividing wall of hostility. Acknowledge and then we’re ready to relate for the building of relationships with others that reflect the glory of the gospel and his kingdom.

## Shepherding Groups

Our Mission is to live in and live out of the gospel in worship, life, and ministry together. The “together” describes how we do what we do as people in our gospel centered lives. We do life together because God has made us his church. The church is the gathered people of God who share their new life in Christ with one another. Luke wrote of the early church, “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. - Acts 2:44. The church has Christ Jesus in common and his life in us gives us life together.

One of the ways we seek to accomplish Life Together is through Shepherding Groups. Shepherding Groups are groupings of church members and regular attenders who live in a particular area of our community. We have divided the church around the areas of West Cola / Cayce / Lexington; Irmo / Chapin; Northeast Cola; and two groups in and around the City of Cola. These groups have from 10 family units up to 23 family units.

Each Shepherding Group has at least one elder and one deacon. The elders of the Shepherding Group are responsible to pray for the group, make regular contact with members of the group, show hospitality to those in the group, care for the souls of those in the group, and conduct quarterly gatherings for the group. The deacons of the Shepherding Group are responsible to care for the needs of the members of the group by stewarding the gifts and resources of those in the group (ie - if there is a special need, a birth, a death, or sickness, the deacons will employ the talents, time, treasures, and resources of those in the Shepherding Group to help in meeting the need). They are also to assist the elders in quarterly gatherings.

The purpose of the Shepherding Groups is to provide a context within the larger body where you can get to know one another for the purpose of sharing in one another’s lives. Therefore, we encourage you to participate in quarterly gatherings, share your gifts in serving one another, pray for one another, and support and encourage the elders and deacons and their wives who are serving your group.

Your Shepherding Groups will be gathering together with one another once during the 3rd Quarter (July - September). Be on the look out for an announcement of your Shepherding Groups gathering.

We have made available a print out of each Shepherding Group. You can pick up a copy of your Shepherding Group in the lobby at Barnwell Street or by requesting one from Cindy Jones in the church office [cindy@ccotc.org](mailto:cindy@ccotc.org). If you do not see your name on one of the Shepherding Group print outs please make that known to Cindy in our church office.

Thank you for participating in life together.