

# Responding to the Issue of Racial Injustice through a Biblical Framework

June 27-28, 2020

## I. Practical Need

- A. Recent – George Perry Floyd age 46 was killed by police during an arrest in Minneapolis MN on May 25<sup>th</sup> of this year. Protests and demonstrations quickly spread across our nation and internationally in a matter of days in response to police brutality and racial injustice. In 21 states the National Guard was activated and sixteen states imposed curfews upon more than 40 cities in attempt to contain the protests from turning violent. Over 50 million people have participated in protests and demonstrations in this country alone demanding that the subject of racial injustice be addressed and positive changes put in place.
- B. Facts – Systemic racism has contributed to cultural race-based gaps that manifest in many different ways in our society. The clearest divides can be seen in measures of household wealth, reflecting the difficulties for people of color to achieve common economic security, and arrest and incarceration rates vs other ethnicities. It is undeniable that we are part of a culture that manifests racism whether we ourselves hold racism in our hearts or not. The following facts were put out in a recent article from Focus on the Family ministries.
1. African-Americans comprise only 13% of the U.S. population and 14% of the monthly drug users, but are 37% of the people arrested for drug-related offenses in America.
  2. Multiple studies show that Blacks and Whites use drugs at similar rates, but Black Americans are 6 times more likely to be arrested for it.
  3. In 2010, the U.S. Sentencing Commission reported that African Americans receive 10% longer sentences than whites through the federal system for the same crimes.
  4. In 2009 African-Americans are 21% more likely than whites to receive mandatory minimum sentences and 20% more likely to be sentenced to prison than white drug defendants.
  5. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics concluded that an African American male born in 2001 has a 32% chance of going to jail in his lifetime, while a Latino male has a 17% chance, and a white male only has a 6% chance.
  6. Black families with zero or negative wealth (value of debt exceeds the value of assets) rose from 8.5 percent to 37 percent between 1983 and 2016. The proportion of for Whites has declined in the same time period from 20% to 9%.
  7. As of the last quarter of 2019, the median White worker made 28 percent more than the median Black worker.
  8. Job resumes with traditionally white-sounding names received 50% more callbacks than those with traditionally Black sounding names.
  9. One indicator of racial disparities at the top of the U.S. earnings scale is the threshold for entry into the top 10 percent of annual income per racial group. White individuals need to have annual income of at least \$117,986 to make it into this category — nearly twice as much as the threshold for Black individuals at \$60,502.
  10. The median Black family holds wealth assets just over \$3,500, compared to the \$147,000 of the median White. The median Latino family, with just over \$6,500. Put differently, the median White family has 41 times more wealth than the median Black family and 22 times more wealth than the median Latino family.
  11. Among college graduates from November 2018 to October 2019, the Black unemployment rate averaged 40 percent higher than white college graduates in the same period.
- C. Fallen Heart – Going beyond the facts and looking into the biblical evidence of the wickedness of our sin nature, it is clear that all of us will automatically discriminate and hold prejudices in our hearts simply as a result of the human condition in this fallen age. (Gal. 5:19-21)

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- D. The Righteous Judge – One of the pinnacle aspects of the nature of our God as revealed in scripture is His fiery zeal to eliminate injustice and establish righteousness in the earth. We are citizens of God’s family, which means we have been invited to partake in like nature and experience as Him. We are also citizens of God’s Kingdom, meaning we have been invited to partake in like purpose with Him. Therefore, the issue of racial injustice should be an issue that very much disturbs the body of Christ and causes her to be actively working to combat and eliminate. Standing against injustice should first foremost find its motivation in aligning with Jesus not in alignment with a political agenda. (Over 100 references to God’s delight in and desire for Justice in the earth - Is. 59:12-16)

## II. Foundational Building Blocks

- A. Biblical Realities – As we set our hearts to square with the truths of the existence of racial injustice and then take action to see justice in time, it is wise to first examine some biblical principals concerning the issue. Without these foundational understandings in place we can end up disoriented and disillusioned as we seek to establish justice.
1. **Paradox of Racial Conflict and Unity** – There is a clear paradox set forth in scripture that in accordance with the rise of lawlessness at the end of the age there will be a rise of racial injustice and conflict. At the very same time there will be a rise of righteousness within the body of Christ and a corresponding rise of unity and love among believers of racial diversity.
    - a. Race Against Race – Jesus tells us that we will see nation rise against nation the original Greek word “ethnos” that is translated nation literally means “race”. The truth is that we will not see a decrease in racial injustice but rather a rise of it, as we grow closer to His return. (Mat. 24:7; Rev. 6:2-8)
    - b. Race Unified in Christ – Jesus also tells us that believers of every race will be unified in Him more and more as we draw nearer to His return. (Jhn 17:20-23; Eph. 4:1-6, 11-16; Rev. 5:7, 7:9)
  2. **Hope Anchored or Differed** – The bible gives only one true hope and solution of solving the problem of racial injustice in our society, it is the promise of the coming King who will rule the earth in perfect justice. As His witnesses we must endeavor to bring the Kingdom of God to all areas of society, however in doing so our ultimate hope of total restoration and transformation must be securely anchored in His return not in this age.
    - a. Restraint – Scripture tells us that the passing of righteous laws and efforts of righteous social reform are Godly and incredibly important endeavors because they restrain wickedness. However, the work of changing the heart is a work of the Spirit and cannot be accomplished through the flesh. (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14)
    - b. Kingdom of Priests – The biblical understanding of believers being a royal priesthood or a kingdom of priests is not to be seen as someone who belongs to an actual kingdom or nation (although we do) but rather the original Greek work translated “kingdom” or “royal” speaks of having dominion or authority. Jesus caused us, by His work on the cross, to have authority as intercessors to implement the dominion of Jesus upon the earth in this age. This reality positions us to bring true change and justice to areas of injustice - far more than being in a leadership capacity socially or governmentally. (Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10)
  3. **Universal Justice of God** – Jesus is a righteous judge in every sphere of injustice and is equally zealous with all injustice. Many times we are particularly burdened with one or two areas of injustice or just in the ones currently facing our culture. One pitfall we can find ourselves in is thinking that the particular area of injustice that is most important to us is the most important to God and therefore should be most

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important to everyone. This generally leads us to offence when the level of importance of the injustice that burdens us is not shared by a fellow believer. (Ps. 103:6)

## III. How do we talk about Racial Injustice and work to Solve it

- A. I realize once again that I am out of my depth in attempting to lay out a plan of solving the issue of racial injustice in our day. That being said I would like to suggest some practical points in which to engage in discussion of this issue and to actually move forward in bringing the Kingdom of God into it.
  1. **Unavoidable** – I believe we need to set our hearts and minds that this issue is unavoidable and must be talked about and confronted as a lifestyle because of the fallenness of this age. There will be seasons where racial injustice does not seem as intense as other seasons but it will always be with us on this side of eternity.
  2. **Process with God** – Before we establish what we think about the issue of racial injustice and our corresponding actions, I believe we must ask the Lord for insight to gain His heart and partner with Him in our actions.
  3. **Self-Justification** – The greatest deceptive power of all exists in the realm of self-justification. If we go into the discussion of racial injustice from a position of justifying ourselves we begin from a place of selfishness and defense, not humility.
  4. **Listen** – Listen with an open heart to the dialogue and felt needs within the issue of racial injustice. Even if you believe they are totally wrong, look to understand where they are coming from. Understanding leads to compassion and compassion produces true Kingdom activity.
  5. **Relational Dialogue** – As much as it depends upon you try and hold discussions and launch activities concerning racial injustice from the foundation of relational equity.