

Prayer (Part 2) – Racial Reconciliation

Matt Chandler – January 10, 2015

Hey, how are we? Are we doing well? All right. Let's get it. Genesis, chapter 1. That's where we're going to camp out tonight. While you're turning there, I want to take a quick break and just lay something before you. I want us to pray about it.

On Monday morning this past week, the Bleeckers took their youngest boy... They have four sons. Their 4-month-old is Coen. He was having a hard time breathing, so they took him to the hospital. They have yet to leave the hospital. Little Coen has been in the NICU for the last three days struggling to breathe. He is having to have help to breathe, and each day they've just said, "Hey, we think tomorrow he'll be able to get out of NICU and go into a regular room and hopefully get you home in the next couple of days." He just has not improved like they wanted him to improve.

Even tonight, you see Michael Bleecker is not here leading us in worship tonight, and that's because he is in the hospital with his youngest. They've just been actively (Faith and he) switching out and trying to be there for their youngest while managing three other boys. A house full of four boys. You can imagine. You should just be praying for them anyway.

On top of that, I wanted us just to spend a couple of minutes here praying for the Bleeckers. As you can imagine, here we are. This started Monday, and we're no closer to seeing any resolution on late Saturday night. Just pray for Michael and Faith, as they are exhausted. Pray the Lord might open up the lungs of little Coen, let him begin to breathe on his own so we can get him back to his brothers.

I'm going to pray for them. I invite you to join me in praying for them. If you're here with a loved one or you don't think praying is weird... You're in church, by the way. You shouldn't. If you do, you're still in church. You should be expecting this. I'm going to pray for Coen. I would love you to join me in that. If you want to group up with your husband or wife or a friend there and pray, you can do that. A great thing about God's ears is he can hear us all simultaneously and then some. I'm going to lead us out, but let's pray and ask the Lord to work.

Father, we thank you for Michael and how he has led here and how well he loves us as fellow members of this church and attendees of this church. I want to pray for just the peace that passes understanding to rest on him and Faith even in this moment. We pray over the lungs of little Coen even now. God, where they're folded over and won't seem to open and operate like they should, just, Father, right now in this moment, you would open up those lungs. Let them blossom and begin to breathe on his own.

Father, that he would begin to take not fast, short breaths like he is but that he would breathe deeply into his lungs and he would no longer need the help of machines and nurses and doctors. We praise you for common grace, and we praise you for hospitals and doctors and science and all of that but just pray right now that you would open up his lungs by your miraculous touch. We love you, and we need you. It's for your beautiful name, amen.

For the last few years (I think we're at year four now), we've taken the month of January and decided we were going to use January to enter us into an intentional season of prayer in which we really drove some stakes in the ground on what we were going to value, what we were going to say is something we were going to be serious about pursuing here at The Village Church.

Year in and year out, I was going to come and preach the same messages, not identical messages but rather identical topics to you repeatedly really from that moment starting several years ago for the rest of my days with you. So if the Lord gives me another 30 years, you can expect it another 30 years. If he gives me another two, you have two.

Then I think the elders will probably find the next dude to do what we're doing, because this isn't *my* burden as much as it's *our* burden. I was sick last week. Mike Dsane just crushed the message on prayer. What a gift that brother is to us. Then now I'm stepping back in. Tonight we're going to talk about *Racial Reconciliation*. That's a stake that's in the ground. That's something we're going to be serious about as a church because we believe it reflects the heart of God. We believe it reflects the implication of the gospel.

It is *not* the gospel. Racial reconciliation is *not* the gospel, but it is an *implication* of the gospel and one that, if applied by a local congregation, puts us as a bright light in the middle of a dark world. Here's what's great about going into this year. I don't have to remind you this is the deal, right? Not

this year. In years past, I've had to go, "Hey, look at *this*. Pay attention to *this*." This year, it's been all over the news all year long.

In fact, *the* topic in the United States of America this year has been very much this rift that's still there, this wound that's still there that I believe only the gospel can heal and only the gospel actually addresses it. So a church that can reject homogeneity, a church that can reject, "We're going to be one culture because that's easy" and rather lean in to God's unfailing, unstoppable plan to show himself as mighty by pulling together what has no real possibility of pulling together and show himself to be mighty by making the many one...

We want to join him in what he is doing and understand that's a long journey, and that will be a difficult journey. That will, at times, be a confusing journey. What God has done that's so magnificent to stare at is he comes to the Jews, and he tells the Jews, "I have sheep that aren't of this flock." Okay? So break that down. I have family members who aren't Jewish. Can we all just praise God together that one came down? Because there was a day you and I were outside.

You think *Gentile*, and you think... Listen. When you read, "Gentile," read, "White dude." All right? I'm just saying that for my white folks. If you're not white and you're not saying, "Read *white guy*" in that text... I'm saying white people have a tendency... I'm not dogging them. I'm one of them. I'm just saying we have this idea we've kind of always been in. We haven't! We were very much the outcasts, very much the Gentile, very much despised, very much on the outside looking in, very much unclean and filthy to the Jewish mind and heart.

Jesus stared right at them and said, "I have sheep that aren't of this flock." Then he would tell parables and make the Samaritan the hero. Oh, y'all don't know. Jews in the first century would pray in the temple that God would not forgive or save the Samaritans. They so despised them as half-breeds, Jews who had intermarried with foreigners. They prayed out loud...

This isn't kind of like we are where our bigotry is quiet and just in our hearts, not out of our mouths because it's not politically correct to say any nonsense with your mouth. "We'll just think it in our hearts and live it with our lives." Back then, they prayed out loud and thanked God that they were not born a woman or a Samaritan and then would ask God to not save the Samaritans.

Now imagine yourself in the crowd when Jesus told the story. "A man fell among robbers. He is beat up, left for dead. Here comes a Jewish Levitical priest, and he sees him. He gets nervous, and he

passes right on by him." Right? All the heroes of the Jewish ethnic rite. It's their kind of hall of... "We're claiming that dude. That guy was Jewish!" I mean, they were like... This was their hall of fame. He walks through, and they all walk right past.

Then here comes the dirty Samaritan. "He is probably going to take what little this dude has left." Except no, the Samaritan picks him up, puts him on his animal, pays for his medical care. If you ever read the Bible and you're like, "Why did they kill Jesus? I mean, he was just healing everybody, giving everybody food, driving out demons. Why are you going to kill a guy like that? You'd think you'd want that guy close..." Because the Samaritan was the hero. That's one reason. Because the Samaritan kept being the hero.

You have 1 Peter 2. "**Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**" This is 1 Peter 2. What God is doing is he is bringing together a new family made of every kind of background imaginable, made up of every type of socioeconomic class imaginable, made up of every type of ethnic group imaginable, language, culture.

He is making a new family out of them, so although I have Chandler blood in my veins, I have been bought by the blood of Christ. My family is far larger than just the little white Chandler family. Is there a whiter name than *Chandler*, besides maybe *Smith*? Right? Yet (this is what Christ has done) he has called me to himself and brought me into a family that's so much bigger than the family I could ever actually have on my own.

We have different backgrounds. We have different experiences, and we're in different tax brackets. Yet we're all children of God, blood-bought. He forms this community of faith that honestly is an assault on the assumptions of the world as we do life together in a way that transcends how the world likes to do life together, which is, "Oh, you're like me? Let's do this."

Because you're looking and you're thinking that maybe I'm not sure what I'm talking about, let's do this. The next three weeks are really going to be built on a strong understanding of the *imago Dei*, or you and I as human beings being made in the image of God. We are different or other than the rest of creation in that we've been made in the image of God. I want to do an image of God primer, and then we'll dive into really how we ought to think about race in light of the fact that we are made in the image of God.

Genesis, chapter 1, starting in verse 24. If you have a Bible, I encourage you to look at this. It's always important that you see I'm not making any of this up. I have thoughts. I usually stand over *there* when I give you my thoughts. But when I'm right *here*, I'm trying to give you the very words of God. Here we go.

"And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.' And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

The interesting thing to note in the narrative of us being created by God is that humankind alone stands outside of the rhythm of the rest of creation. The rest of creation is, "Let's call forth the living creatures, livestock and creeping things." When he gets to us, it's no longer, "Then he created... Then he created... Then he created..."

When it gets to humankind, God (the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit) says, **"Let us make man in our image..." "...in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."** The image of God. The *imago Dei*. You and I as mankind are very different than the rest of the creative order. We know this intrinsically. We just know it.

If you remember back to *A Beautiful Design*, the illustration I kept using was that if you looked at my little family makeup... I have a beautiful wife, beautiful two daughters, and a handsome son. That's the Chandler clan. We also have a dog named Gus (Australian shepherd). He is somewhat obedient. I kind of like him. Then my daughter has a horse named Gypsy.

If the budget gets tight and someone has to go, are any of my children or wife on the table for consideration? Is that a mathematic question? Do I in that moment go, "Budget is tight. Who is costing me the most money? It looks like Lauren has to go." No, you don't make decisions like that.

Why? Because Lauren is far more valuable than Gypsy and Gus, because she has been made in the image of God, even if she *is* the most expensive Chandler. Right?

I mean, it's not math. It's not like a science. Math doesn't decide that. She is more valuable. Listen. We could switch it up as many times as you want to. I used as the illustration Darrin Payne, 9:00 a.m. every Sunday morning, sits right there. He is special needs. He will never be able to spell his own name, will never have a job that contributes to society. He is far more valuable than Secretariat or any other animal that ever lived because he has been made in the image of God.

Those who have been made in the image of God, their relational dynamics are different than everything else in creation in three directions. The first direction is man toward God. I'm going to try to be gentle here. Your dog doesn't pray. He doesn't worry what's going to happen to his pups. Your cat never stays awake at night and sure hopes that all the kitties of the litter love and serve the Lord and find another good cat that will take care of them.

You know this, right? I know some of you. Well, I have to say that because some of you buy your dogs clothes. Anyway, they have their own little bed, but it's like a four-poster bed with its own air unit. I just feel like sometimes I have to say this. We know this to be true. No other created being has a relationship with the Lord or has the capacity for a relationship with the Creator like we do. We and we alone as humankind stand outside the rest of the creative order, and we pray, and we seek, and we wrestle with shame.

Your dog and cat don't wrestle with shame. I know you're like, "Well, actually when I come home and he has chewed up something and I'm like, 'Did you do this?' he buries his little head." Right. He is scared. That's not shame. If you don't believe me, leave something down on the floor and leave the house again.

If my dog, Gus, snatches something off the coffee table, like steals a sandwich or something and we handle that and he puts his head down and then we just put a sandwich out and leave, do you think he is just going to go, "I'm not going to do it this time"? No! He is just like, "Dumb humans!" He snatches it. He is not going to feel guilt or remorse or sadness. This isn't what they do.

I'm not hating on your dog, Bootsie. I'm telling you she doesn't have the capacity to have a relationship with the Creator. But *we* do. But we do! "Made in the image of God" means we have the

capacity to pursue him and that he in Christ is pursuing us. He is not pursuing your dog. He is not pursuing whatever pet you have, but he is pursuing us.

The other difference between us and the rest of the creation is we have this relationship with the Lord and then our relationship with the rest of the creative order is different. Right? We have been given the command to fill and subdue the earth. Here's what that means. It means we have a responsibility to give ourselves over to the flourishing of environments.

It means we're not cruel to animals. It means we're not heartless. It means where we are, things should flourish. Lions don't put us in zoos, right? We subdue the earth. We fill it. There's never been like a HOA with a bunch of animals out in the Serengeti going, "How do we build the community? How do we make this a safer place for all of us?" That just doesn't happen.

I can guarantee you the antelope aren't showing up. That poor guy. In every *National Geographic*, you just know he is going to die when it shows the antelope on the plain. You're like, "I'm going to see this dude die today." They don't do that. *We* do that. We build. We order. We create laws and systems. The animal kingdom doesn't do that. They're driven by instinct.

Then finally, all human life is far more valuable than the rest of the creative order. Our relationship with the Lord is different. Our relationship with the creative order is different. Then our relationship because of our Creator is different with one another. Here's what I mean by that. If two lions get in a fight and one kills the other, there is no lion jail, right? Human beings don't even look at that and go, "Oh my gosh! This is terrible." We're just like, "Mother Nature."

But if we kill each other, if we hurt each other, if we steal from one another, then there has been moral law since the beginning of mankind to dictate our relationship with one another. We really see this in two pretty big ways. First, we see the worth of all human life. If you look back historically on the value of human life, there are really two periods I'm well aware of that, looking back on it, we would all kind of agree, "That's right" and look with disdain on those times.

There was a movie that came out a couple of years ago called *300*. It was about the Spartans. It was a bunch of airbrushed dudes who had been on creatinine and probably anabolic steroids. We watched them slaughter the hordes. It was all green screen and ridiculous, and we loved it.

At the beginning of that movie, there was this scene where this guy on a mountaintop looked over this baby, and he was checking for any blemish. If there was any blemish in the child, they would throw the child off the top of the mountain and kill the child because Spartan people must be perfect.

We watched that in a movie, and we were like, "Oh yeah." Historically speaking, the Spartans did just that. Before *300* came out, they were despised for that by historians. They literally would take newborn children, and any birthmark, any deformity, anything that made them anything other than perfect, they would be labeled a reject and killed, thrown into the valley below so the valley below was filled with the bodies of infants.

Then there were the Nazis. Did anybody name their kid Hitler? Did anybody just go for that? Just go, "Do you know what I'd like to do? I think I'm going to name... This is little baby Hitler." No, we didn't! Why? Because in this period of time, he is looked at and despised, not just that he tried to eradicate the Jews, but you also know they experimented on and slaughtered hundreds of thousands of handicapped men and women, experimented on them and then killed them.

Did you know they also tried to euthanize old people? I'm not going to define the age range there. I'm just saying if you were old and couldn't contribute, they'd put you down. Nobody looks back on Nazi Germany and is like, "Man, we wish they would have won!" Right? Because we look at how little they value human life, and we can look at it all these years removed and think, "How deplorable! How wicked! How shameful!"

Because we know in our guts... I'm not just talking from the Bible. We know in our guts that a baby born without a hand shouldn't be killed. He or she has value because he is made in the image of God, because she is made in the image of God.

Then the second thing out of this elevation of human life is you see the equality of all human life. Now because we live in the day we live, that seems like a no-brainer, doesn't it? "Oh yeah. The equality of all human life." Well, listen to what the Bible says here. I'm going to read you a verse that, before I was a Christian, I would use to justify not believing in Jesus Christ.

If you're not a believer, here. I'm giving you some ammo. All right? Here we go. Acts 17, starting in verse 26. "**And he made from one man every nation...**" I'm just going to stop there. This word

nation is not nation state like you and I would think nation state. This word *nation* is *ethnos*, ethnic groups.

When you read *nations* in the Bible, we're not talking about borders and lines and like we think of nation states today where you have the United States. You have Mexico. You have Canada. You have the countries in the UK. You have France. You have Germany. You have that. That's not this word *nations*. This is *ethnos*. This is ethnic groups. Let's read it again.

"And he made from one man every [ethnic group] of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us..."

Here's what I would do before I was a Christian. I would read a verse like this and go, "Okay, wait. Hold on. So you're saying from Adam, this one guy, came the rest of us? From Adam came all white people, all black people, all Hispanics, all Latinos, all Asians, all of us, Indians? We all came from one dude? How? That's absurd! You guys are so dumb. I can't believe you believe this!" That's what I would have done. I might have even actually done that.

I mean, does anybody else want to know how that works? Anyone? Oh, nobody wants to know. You guys are so awesome. You don't wonder about that. You don't read that and go, "So wait a minute. From Adam... What color is Adam? Is Adam like a rainbow? Is that dude like multi-colored, like a prism in the light? How do Adam and Eve bring about all of us?" Okay, well the Bible is going to argue just that way, that from Adam came every ethnic group.

I love when this happens. The argument in the scientific community right now is that race is a social construct and not a scientific one. It's a *social* construct, not a scientific one. Let me give you a guy at the forefront of this argument, not an evangelical. Michael Hadjiargyrou. He is the chair of Life Sciences at NYIT. He is a molecular biologist. Here's what he says:

"Despite notions to the contrary, there is only one human race. Our single race is independent of geographic origin, ethnicity, culture, color of skin or shape of eyes—we all share a single phenotype, the same or similar observable anatomical features and behavior." It means wherever you are in the world, wherever there are human beings, you pull out that eyeball. It's going to be exactly like anybody else's eyeball on the earth.

Regardless of the shape of eyes or the shape of the nose or the size of the mouth or whatever else kind of can be categorized and characterized within ethnic groups, they all serve the same function and all have been designed to the same end. That's how he'll argue, but then he goes on to say this.

"Science highlights these similarities in our embryonic development, physiology...biochemistry...and more recently, genomics (our genetic makeup). As a molecular biologist, this last one is indeed the most important to me—data show that the DNA of any two human beings is 99.9 percent identical, and we all share the same set of genes, scientifically validating the existence of a single biological human race and one origin for all human beings. In short, we are all brothers and sisters."

Now I love when science catches up to the Bible! Listen to me. This brother is not some conservative evangelical reading Genesis 1 and making an argument. This is a molecular biologist at NYIT who says, "We all have the same origin. We're all brothers and sisters. We all came from the same place." Now he doesn't know where, but I do. We read it, right? We read it!

This is why when scientists make claims, I'm always just happy to go, "Gosh! Okay. I'm going to give you another couple of decades. I think probably you're missing something there, but I'm just going to trust the Word because you guys keep catching up to it." In light of this sameness, in light of the fact that regardless of our skin color or shape of our eyes or anything like that, what we see is we are 99.9 percent identical, all made in the image of God, by God, for the glory of God.

What are the implications of this? Well, the first one I'm just going to straight rip off from somebody else, and then the other two are mine. All right? Not *unique* to me, but this is like word-for-word, I'm yanking this from a friend. What are the implications of this? Here is the first implication.

"In determining the significance of who you are, being a person in the image of God compares to ethnic distinctives the way the noonday sun compares to a candlestick. In other words, finding your main identity in whiteness or blackness or any other ethnic color or trait is like boasting that you carry a candle to light the cloudless noonday sky.

Candles have their place. But not to light the day. So color and ethnicity have their place, but not as the main glory and wonder of our identity as human beings. The primary glory of who we are is

what unites us in our God-like humanity, not what differentiates us in our ethnicity." That's John Piper.

Here's what that is saying. I, Matt Chandler, am a white guy. My mom is white. My dad is white. My brother and sisters are. I was raised in a white home. I will always be white. It doesn't matter how many books I read or whom I hang out with or what music... I am a white guy, will see the world through white lenses.

I don't need to apologize for that. I don't feel guilty for that. God made me who I am, and it is *not* my identity. If it is, it's about nine notches below where our culture likes to place it. How small and pathetic is God if all I have is white culture, if that's as big as the cross worked for me? Just people like me, if that's all God has for me, how shallow is this journey? No, no, no.

He is like, "No, no, no. I purchased all sorts of stuff for you, friend. You're a son of God. That's your primary identity. Because you're my son, you're going to have friends with different socioeconomic status. You're going to have people in your life with different backgrounds. You're going to have people who see the world differently. I'm going to introduce you to brothers and sisters who don't see the world like you, and it will drive you crazy at times, and you're going to drive them crazy at times. I'm going to sanctify you in it."

All right. Straight up. How many of you have family members (members in your family, biological family members) who drive you crazy? Even if you're sitting next to them, you can raise your hand. Then when they ask on the way home, go, "No, no, no. Aunt Betty." They'll be like, "Who is Aunt Betty?" You're like, "I don't let her come to the house. Don't worry about it. I told you. You saw me raise my hand. I don't like her."

Here's the deal. If being so much alike, raised in the same house, ate the same meals, were taught the same lessons by Mom, Dad, or Mom *or* Dad, and we still bother each other, imagine what happens when God begins to knit people together who don't share that background. Do you think there might be more sparks there? Here's the good news. Might there be more sanctification there?

See, what I need to expose my selfishness is not more people like me. See, here's a true story. I didn't think I was selfish, and then I got married. I needed to live in the house with a woman, and then I went, "Oh my gosh! I'm selfish!" I didn't think I was. Even the roommates I had would be like, "Chandler isn't selfish. He is legit. He is serving everybody. He is great."

Then I got married, and I was like, "Oh, yep. I'm selfish. There it is." I've said this before. I didn't know there was a boy smell. I didn't realize that was actually a smell, and then my wife told me that. Then years later, I walked out. I was like, "Gosh! What is that?" She was like, "Uh-huh. That was what your apartment smelled like when we met."

In the end, we need that type. What diversity does is it reveals and it opens up places, little niches and hideaways in your heart and your mind you didn't know were there until you start getting around people who don't see the world like you see it. My primary identity has to be son of God, because what God has for me is so much bigger...so much bigger than just my own race, so much bigger than my own ethnicity, so much bigger than just what white folk value or how white folks see.

I don't hate my people. Don't send that email to me. It will make me angry. When I talk about white privilege, I'm not telling you, "You should feel guilty about being white." That's ignorant. Don't send that to me. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying predominant culture has privileges. It's all over the Bible. They have to be stewarded well.

Here we are, gifted by God with this gift of dividing wall of hostility comes down. "I'm going to create a new people, a people like the world has never seen. You're going to reflect my glory. You're going to make much of my name. It's going to be difficult at times, and I'm going to sanctify you through it. I'm going to reveal your selfishness. I'm going to reveal your bigotry. I'm going to reveal your pride. It's going to be awesome."

We don't think it is, but the Lord loves to work in our hearts in such ways. That's the first implication. Don't be the moron with a candle in a noontday sun going, "Look at me!" Don't be that guy. All right? You don't brag about your candle in the sun.

The second implication: human beings have different backgrounds and baggage and should be walked with an empathy and compassion, with a desire to understand. We know this already. We know this in how we interact with one another. We just fail to apply it when it comes to the rub ethnically.

If you grew up and you were the good girl, then how easy is it for you to judge the bad girl? If you grew up the bad girl, how easy is it for you to judge the good girl? Right? We know this. Different

backgrounds both tend to elevate themselves and judge others because of their background. We know this. Let's throw ethnicity out the window.

Good girls without the gospel have a tendency to judge harshly girls who made other decisions. I've been around long enough to know girls who have treated themselves cheaply have a way to feel self-righteous and to justify their lives and to look down at good girls. That's how insidiously dark our hearts are.

We already know as a church family that when we get together in Home Group and one of us feels guilty because we *thought* about smoking a cigarette, the other girl who is chain-smoking coming out of prostitution thinks we're absurd. Yet this is where the grace of God begins to transform lives. It's in this place where we empathize, where we walk alongside, where we show compassion, and we're slow to judge.

Romans 12:15. I'm going to rant. Just FYI. If you're like, "I thought that *was* one." No, it's coming. That was actually in the notes. I'll go off notes here. This is a command on Christian behavior to the people of God. Romans 12:15. **"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."** My big frustration this past year as all this stuff flared up across our country was the widespread lack of empathy and compassion from white Christians toward our African American brothers and sisters as these things blew up.

Now let's chat. Here's my rant. Eye contact. *Facts matter*. Facts matter! What is true matters. Let's have a little pastoral chat. The timing of those facts also matters. Correct? Let me put it in a pastoral place for you so you can see how... I lost my mind on Twitter one day. I mean, I just lost my mind. I mean, I just finally snapped.

I'm going to make up an illustration here because I don't want to use someone from our church in a scenario like this. Let's say one of our young families didn't childproof their house, and their little 9-month-old baby was crawling around on the floor. They picked up a paperclip, and they jammed it into a socket, and the kid died. Then I show up, and I walk in to the room. There the EMTs are putting the body in and getting it out of the house. Mom and Dad are wailing.

Is that the time for me to begin to say, "Well, you know, if you childproofed... Here's a link to how you childproof. If you just put this in..."? How absurd and wicked would I be if, in the midst of their sorrow, their loss, their confusion, their anger, I started to talk about how you can avoid that? Do

you see how absurd that is? That's why I lost my mind. It's like, "Shut up!" Enter in. Try to understand. Just say, "I'm sorry." This is not the time for facts. Facts have their place. Don't email me. Facts come out in time. You give facts time to work, but I don't bring it up that night.

Do you want an easier one than that? How many of you are married? Okay, watch this. This will be a male-dominated issue. Early on in my marriage, Lauren would come, and she would say, "This is how I feel." I have a list of facts on why she shouldn't feel that way. Now anybody else? Watch this. Yo, what did I tell you? Keep your hands up. Now this is mostly a male issue, right? This is mostly a male issue.

Our girls come to us. They're just like, "That really hurt my feelings. I can't believe you would even say that to me." What do we do? "I'm just going to give you the facts. Here's the deal. I'm the one who planned this date. Do you think I planned this date just to bring you out here and insult you at dinner? This was my idea. Remember a couple of weeks ago when I bought you those flowers? You know, you said *this*, and I said..."

You just start laying out the facts. Does that cause the situation to deescalate, or does it cause it to burn even hotter? Well, it burns even hotter. Let's do it. Has there been a wife in here who, as the husband laid forth the facts, they went, "You know, I don't feel that way at all anymore. I feel valued and cherished by you. Thank you"? Does any woman want to raise her hand and go, "That's exactly how it happened"?

Notice not one. Right? Because there's a time and place for facts. We know this, but for whatever reason, when this kind of ethnic spark thing happens, all of a sudden white people are all about the facts. The Bible says, no, you mourn with those who mourn. You mourn with those who mourn! You enter in. You try to understand.

Hey, listen. It's fine if you don't understand, but if you don't understand, you probably shouldn't be linking crap to your Facebook page. If you don't understand, you probably should keep your mouth shut. In fact, I think there are a whole bunch of proverbs that go, "Hey, it's best to just shut your mouth than open it and reveal you're a moron." That's a paraphrase. If you try to look in your thing for *moron*, it's not coming up. It's a paraphrase. It's in there.

There's a time to just be quiet if you don't understand and not berate and beat people up with facts you found on the Internet, which is a problem in and of itself, right? Truth has a place. Truth takes

time. While we wait, we empathize. While we wait, we seek to understand. While we wait, we mourn with those who mourn. That's the distinctively Christian way to behave. We had a shot, and by and large, we blew it.

Third implication: not entering into the joys, sorrows, and hopes of our brothers and sisters is out of step with the gospel. Galatians 2:11-14 says, "**But when Cephas [that's Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him...**" That's the apostle Paul. He hated Jesus and then got saved. "**...opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.**" Now can we agree this is awkward? This is a little intense here, right?

We know Peter. He walked on the water for a couple of steps before he nearly drowned. When he was at Antioch, "**...I opposed him to his face...**" All right? This wasn't a prayer request at Group. "Hey, we need to pray for Peter. That dude is condemned." This is, "**...I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.**" This is very strong language.

"For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas [Peter] before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?'"

Let me explain the situation. Peter is in Antioch, and he is hanging with the Gentiles (non-Jews), and he is loving it. He is having supper with them. He has some pork ribs, some bacon-wrapped pork ribs, enjoying it, like killing... He is just enjoying his Gentile folk. He is loving. He is learning Gentile music. He is getting it, man. He is loving it! Then this group of Jews rolled in, and he got embarrassed. He got embarrassed, and he began to pull away.

"Peter, are you sitting with us tonight?" "No, man. I'm going to sit with my friends who just came in from James." Then he began to not only *not* eat but to separate himself fully. See, eating together in this part of the world in this period of human history, that fellowship was all about, "We're in this together. You're me. I'm you. We're a family. I love you."

This is why Jesus was so often attacked for eating with sinners. "This man eats with sinners" is like this body-slam accusation against Jesus Christ. So Peter won't eat with the Gentiles anymore. Now

he is with the Jews, and he wants nothing to do with them. "I'm not eating any pork. I hate pork, man. Bacon? That's gross." Who was it that got the vision of bacon coming down in a tarp before him? It was Peter!

How easy are we pulled back into homogenous comfort! Paul says, "That's condemned. That's out of step with the gospel." He fronts him, opposes him to his face. Peter! Opposed him to his face. "That's out of step with the gospel." To refuse to enter in to God's plan to diversify his people is out of step with the gospel. It's the anti-gospel.

The gospel is purchasing men and women for every tribe, tongue, and nation on earth. The anti-gospel is it belongs to a select group of people who all look alike. In light of this, what do we do? That's the big question. What do we do? There are three things, and I alliterated just to show my Baptist roots. Here's the first thing.

1. *Pray*. We're going to pray! Tomorrow night at 5:00, so the game will be over... We'll be rejoicing or in mourning depending on where you are (or indifferent still). We're going to come in here at 5:00. New Beginnings Church, which is a large African American church, is going to join us for a prayer meeting. I'm going to lead the first part. Pastor Joe Fields will lead the second part.

We're just going to pray together as congregations. We're going to pray for forgiveness and perspective and listening in love. We're going to pray for liberty and embracing of Christ's culture, being standard-bearers and being peacemakers. We're going to pray. On top of that tomorrow night, at 5:00 here at the Flower Mound Campus, I'm going to keep pleading with you and keep pushing you to...

2. *Pursue*. What do I mean by pursue? Okay, there are two things I mean when I'm talking about pursuing in light of God's plan to radically diversify us as a covenant community of faith. Part of *pursue* is increasing your ethnic IQ. Are you tracking with what I mean by that? My friend, Albert Tate, who pastors a church in Los Angeles, a very diverse church, says you can... I love it. I don't want to mess up his line, but he says you can't get a GED in the United States of America without understanding white culture, but you can get a PhD and know nothing about black culture.

We have to increase our ethnic IQ. How do you do that? Well, there are a couple of ways. First, read. Let me give you some things that were helpful for me and helped shape. *The Warmth of Other Suns*. That's a phenomenal book about the Great Migration. *Letters to a Birmingham Jail*. I'll post this in a

blog on Monday and get it out to you. *Letters to a Birmingham Jail*. I actually got to write a chapter of that. *Bloodlines* by John Piper. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.

Then let me encourage you with this. If you have a Home Group here, go see *Selma* together. Look at *Selma* through the lenses of church history. Notice how active the church was in this fight and how active she *should* be even now. If you don't think this is necessary, YouTube some clips of 1960 Jim Crow nonsense, and then watch the news clips from this year. You'll see we haven't gone anywhere.

The second thing on pursuit. First, increase your ethnic IQ (reading). Secondly, pursue relationships. If you're like, "Well, gosh, man! I mean, my whole neighborhood is white. Everybody I know is white." Or, "My whole neighborhood is black. Everywhere I go, I'm hanging out with black people." Okay, so stop! Gosh! It's that easy. Stop! White people, go to places where there aren't white people. "That could be scary!" Sure! Go!

There's a family at our church who used to take their boys to an African American barbershop to get their hair cut. I thought that was awesome. I was mad I didn't think of that. I was like, "That is brilliant!" Then my African American brothers and sisters, you'll have to help us here. This is not just a white issue. Hispanics, Latinos, Asians, you'll have to help us here.

Proximity matters, which means we can't stay in proximities that are just all white or all black or all Hispanic or all Latino or all Asian. We have to force the issue. We have to force it! I thought the barbershop was a great idea. Find where it is. Go! Then the last. Not only are we going to have to be *prayerful*, not only are we going to have to *pursue*, but we also need to...

3. *Persevere*. We also need to persevere! This is going to be difficult. It's going to be difficult! There are things that are offensive that I didn't know were offensive. Has anybody else run into this in their life? I have said things, and I have commented on things I had no idea they were offensive, and they were. I praise God for my African American, Asian, and Latino friends who were able to engage me graciously over those things as opposed to just writing me off as some racist bigot. We'll need to persevere together.

My white friends, as we're moving and fighting for this... I said it a couple of weeks ago, and I'll say it again tonight. If you're not interested in this, I'm just going to encourage you, find another church. If you want to just kind of dwell in homogeneity, I'm just going to fight this fight all the way to glory. So if none of this resonates with you, I'm just telling you, if you're think we're moving too fast in regard

to music, you think we're moving too fast in my angst for this and my anxiety for this, then I'm just going to wear you out. Why would you do that to yourself? Go on!

I'm not encouraging you to. I'd rather you stay and fight, but if you think we're going to move too fast, persevere. African Americans, Latinos, Asians, if you think I'm not moving fast enough, you think we're not moving fast enough, persevere. The goal here is not to become a black church or a Hispanic church or a Latino church or an Asian church. That's not the goal. The goal is to become the people of God.

That means all of us will at times lay down our preferences for the greater glory. We must persevere. We must pray, pursue, and persevere. If I were really Baptist, I'd have a poem. I don't have one, so quasi-Baptist. This is our fight. Make it a priority to join us tomorrow night at 5:00. Let's just come. Let's pray together. What a beautiful first step. Get together with your Home Group. Go see *Selma*. These are just tiny little steps, but they make a difference.

Already in the last three years, we've seen significant change here at The Village, significant growth. I mean, look around the room tonight. Look around our staff page. I mean, God is at work. He is moving. Now, straight, not as fast as I wanted to, but I can say that in almost every area of my life. Let's trust him a day at a time, a step at a time when we fight the good fight of faith because it pleases the heart of God. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for what you've called us into. Our ethnicity, our cultural backgrounds all have a place, but a place like a candle, not a place like the sun. Father, may we stand firm on our identity, rooted in who you have called us to be and who you say we are. Move our hearts a little farther. Father, if in this place as we've just read the Word of God and let it kind of bear a little weight on us, if we've seen some things in our heart, maybe some bigotry, some unforgiveness... That can fit in any ethnic heart in this room.

Maybe there's a young African American man or woman who is holding onto resentment or bitterness or just refuses to trust or just kind of carries an edge of suspicion and animosity. God, I pray you melt that under your grace. Father, where white Christians have put on blinders and just refused to consider, refused to grow in their IQ ethnically, refused to mourn with those who mourn or act compassionately or empathetically with others, I pray you'd break our hearts over that. You have not dealt that way with us. Continue to work among us, Father.

I pray for my children that they would not know what a homogeneous church looks like. I pray this wound...this deep, nasty wound...particularly between the whites and African Americans in this country would finally be healed by your grace. There's individual responsibility there, and there's systemic injustice there. You're going to have to work in all of those domains for the glory of your name and the good of your people. Help us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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