

# 10 Reasons Why Christians Should Lead the Way in Racial Reconciliation

As our nation is being ripped apart by racial strife and as bloodshed is filling the land, it is time for the church to lead the way in reconciliation, healing and justice.

Here are 10 reasons why we, as followers of Jesus, must set the example for America.

1) We are called to be salt and light. Jesus said that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16), meaning that we are the ones who illuminate the darkness and provide a moral compass for the nation. In the words of Martin Luther King, "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool."

But Dr. King also gave this warning, which we cannot ignore: "If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority."

It is high time we recapture our prophetic zeal.

2) We have a unique unity, having the same Father and being saved by the same blood. Some years ago, while speaking about the turbulent 1960s in America, I asked the audience if any of them had been involved with Eastern religions or radical social causes at that time.

There were two couples sitting next to each other, one black the other white, but they didn't know each other personally. The black man said, "I was in the Black Panthers!" The white

man said, "I was in the Ku Klux Klan!" They laughed and smiled and hugged each other.

That is the unity we enjoy in Jesus.

3) We are called to be peacemakers and ambassadors of reconciliation. Jesus pronounced a blessing on the peacemakers, saying that they would be called children of God (Matt. 5:9), and Paul wrote that the ministry of reconciliation had been given to us (2 Cor. 5:17-21), and it begins by us calling people to come into right relationship with the Lord.

This is who we are in Jesus, and this is our sacred mission as His ambassadors.

4) As those who have been forgiven, we can forgive others. Paul said to his readers, "even as Christ forgave you, so you must do" (Col. 3:13). Forgiveness is a key to healing and restoration.

There are certainly legitimate grievances that must be addressed and serious concerns that must be aired, but unless we add forgiveness into the mix, we will never fully heal the wounds and build bridges of trust.

Each of us has been forgiven of much; let us extend that same forgiveness towards others.

5) In Jesus, there is neither black or white, yellow or red. The gospel transcends every racial and cultural barrier, and in countries like India I have seen high caste and untouchable work side by side as brothers and sisters in Jesus. We need to take hold of the revolutionary truth of these words: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, and there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Our unity is expressed in our diversity, as each part of the

body brings its unique contribution and heritage and perspective. That's what makes us one.

6) We know the life-changing power of the gospel, and with God, all things are possible. Things look dire right now in America, especially in the midst of a divisive and potentially volatile presidential election. Has America been this divided in decades?

Thankfully, we know how Jesus can radically change lives, we know how He can miraculously rearrange circumstances, and we understand that what Satan intends for evil, God can use for good.

As we often hear, man's extremity is God's opportunity, and we must determine that the current social crisis will become a stepping stone rather than a stumbling block.

7) We have a common enemy. We understand there is a real devil who is a murderer and a liar (John 8:44). We know he hates black and white and red and yellow all the same. We know he wants to divide and destroy. We stand united against him.

8) We understand spiritual warfare and the power of prayer. Steve Strang has written that, "These Racial Divides are Principalities and Powers We Must Battle in the Spirit," and he pointed to the unifying role played by the church in Sanford, Florida after the death of Trayvon Martin.

It is true that all of us are responsible for our actions and we can't say, "The devil made me do it." But we also recognize that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

By bathing our words and actions in prayer and by "warring" in prayer in the spiritual realm, we will see changes come in the natural realm.

9) We understand the power of the tongue. We know that, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger," and we understand that, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Prov. 15:1; 18:21a). We also know that, "There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise is health" (Prov. 12:18).

Understanding the power of words, we can determine to be constructive rather than destructive in our speech, to bring life, not death, and healing, not hurt.

10) We know how the gospel has changed America in the past. Christian leaders led the way in abolishing slavery in the 1800s, overcoming the objections of other Christians who upheld slavery, and the Civil Rights movement was birthed in the church and often spread through the church, overcoming bigoted views that remained in other churches.

If the gospel could bring down the walls of slavery and segregation, surely it can bring down the walls that separate us today, and as a fellow-follower of Jesus, I urge you to make a positive contribution in whatever sphere of influence you have, be it large or small.

Together with the Lord, we can bring healing to the land.