

Can't We All Just Move On?

Why the issue of racism won't go away—and what that means for you

This was not the issue we had planned.

No, the June issue of *Charisma* was supposed to be bright, cheery and reflective of the onset of long, sunny summer days. We had a great lineup of upbeat stories and easy reads—one of those issues you could devour while at the pool yet still chew on afterward.

Instead we have an ominous cover bearing what has become the decade's most symbolic piece of clothing yet: a hoodie. We have a cover story on racism—not exactly the topic you want to bring up in a month most families are celebrating another school year ending and possibly a nearing vacation at the beach or lake.

No, instead we have what my publisher calls “possibly the most important issue we've ever put out.” And we have a message that isn't just timely given the aftermath of the Trayvon Martin case, it's *absolutely necessary*. Sometimes original plans must take a back seat to what's essential—and this is one of those times.

Since March, the nation has been engaged in a discussion surrounding the tragic shooting of a 17-year-old. Bloggers, columnists and talking heads have given 101 reasons why this *isn't* about race, why it's absurd in a day in which we have a black president that people are “playing the race card,” and why this is merely a legal matter—period.

I doubt you'll hear that logic from many minority groups. And I'm certain it's not the case in Sanford, Fla., where Trayvon was shot and where there's a history of underlying racial division. (For more on this local perspective and how the

Trayvon story hits home—literally—for *Charisma*, see p. 22.) Across the country, racism and “justice” (or the lack thereof) go hand-in-hand. So while I can partly understand why people see the Trayvon case as being more about justice than race, the sheer passion behind the responses and interactions we’ve witnessed over the past three months prove that, like it or not, racism is still a factor. It may look a little different in 2012 than it did 50 years ago, but it remains a bigger factor than we’d all like to admit.

That’s especially true in the church, where we’ve dealt with the issue as if it were something we “fix,” only to move on to another problem. But racism isn’t something we can apply a Band-Aid to with a conference session on identificational repentance or a Sunday sermon series on John 17 unity. Racism is a spiritual principality that Satan has successfully established on earth since humanity’s earliest days. And if the church hopes to ever truly triumph over this age-old stronghold, we must be committed for the long haul and no longer just offer lip service to loving those who look different than us.

That begins and ends with relationship—relationship that goes beyond interracial handshakes at the occasional reconciliation meeting. At its heart, racism reveals a lack of authentic relationship. By contrast, the core of Jesus’ ministry modeled authentic relationship: What else can explain His masterful plan to change the earth through 12 guys into whom He’d invested three years of His life? What, besides a desire for true relationship, would make a God pursue His creation to the ends of time?

Because we were made in God’s image, humans have a natural disposition for this kind of relationship. We reflect it equally well via our intimacy with Him *and* our intimacy with each other—which is why Jesus’ last conversation with the Father before facing death centered on our unity. Yes, it matters *that* much.

We can ruminate all day on God's command to love one another, but until we take action and develop real relationship—whether across the street, suburb or city—it means nothing (which suits Satan just fine).

Believers, we've preached to each other about actively loving across racial divides for ages. Yet until we truly recognize this as our greatest weapon to defeat one of the enemy's most powerful principalities, we'll continue to "reconcile" with only a surface, trendy love.

Marcus Yoars is the editor of *Charisma*. You can check out his blog at or connect with him via Twitter @marcusyoars or