

Jarrid Wilson: Thoughts on Racism From a Suburban White Man

Let me start this post by saying how sorry I am that it's taken me almost 30 years to personally digest the reality of racism in our country. Let me apologize for never truly seeing what was taking place right in front of me.

And, let me admit my fault in keeping quiet as a white, male pastor when hate and harm affected the lives of millions each and every day that passed, all while I had a platform to bring light to this horrific situation. I'm sorry.

This not an apology for being white, but instead an apology for being a white man who had yet to publicly stand up against the injustice directed towards my brothers and sisters of all ethnic backgrounds.

I'm a privileged white man (as I've been told) who grew up in the suburbs of southern California, attended schools that were a melting pot of ethnicity, went to a church that was primarily Hispanic, had friends and girlfriends from all different ethnic backgrounds, and never made it a hundred miles outside of my city limits until I was twenty-two years old. I guess you could say I lived in a bubble, and the idea of racism was something that seemed foreign to me—as if it was something that only took place in movies or really rough parts of our country. Straight ignorance, right?

I've been told I'm a privileged white man because of the following:

- I've never been pulled over because of the color of my skin.
- I've never been followed in a store because of the color

of my skin.

- I've never been treated unfairly because of the color of my skin.
- I've never been unaccepted by the family of someone I was dating because of the color of my skin.
- I've never been bullied because of the color of my skin.
- I've never been treated unfairly by law enforcement because of the color of my skin.

All these statements are in fact, true regardless of how much I dislike the term #WhitePrivilege.

It wasn't until I moved to Memphis, Tennessee that all my assumptions about racism changed. The KKK just so happened to be hosting a rally the same day I got into town, and at that very moment, racism wasn't just an idea or foreign happening anymore; it was taking place right in my own backyard. I couldn't believe it. It was eye-opening. I felt the pit of my stomach turn. I was blindsided by the fact that not everyone had parents like mine who taught me to never judge someone by the color of their skin or where they're from, but to instead love all people the same way Christ loved the Church, without partiality (Rom. 2:11).

Little did I know this wasn't out of the norm for the south, let alone for our entire country if I were to open my eyes a bit. If I'm transparent, I think the concept of racism was something I didn't want to believe, so I purposely shut myself out from seeing it even if it was in plain sight. I was scared to admit that there were people in this world who would hate others because of their skin color. I was afraid to admit that our country hadn't fully moved on from the dreadful past of enslaving African-Americans for personal gain.

My experience of living in Memphis changed my life completely, and I was no longer hiding from the reality of racial discrimination but instead leaning into it, wanting to learn more about its origin, and how I could help be a voice towards

finding reconciliation.

The only problem was I didn't know where to start. I was a bit scared. I didn't know what I was allowed to say or not allowed to say, or whether or my voice would be taken seriously if anything was said at all. All I knew was this; Jesus stood against injustice, and it was time for me to man up do the same regardless if I was taken seriously. It's the right thing to do. It's what Jesus would have done. We're called to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31).

Over the last few years I've found myself leaning into influential African-American leaders—meeting them in person, reading their books, studying their blog posts, listening to their sermons and even attending their racial reconciliation classes. I still have no clue exactly what I'm doing, but I know that I need to learn from people whom I believe are prominent voices in racial reconciliation and in the multi-ethnic church.

I'm realizing the importance of not just using photos of good-looking white people in my blog posts. I'm realizing the importance of having friends who don't look like me. I'm realizing the importance of seeking unification as it pertains to race and ethnic diversity.

Although we may look different, we were all created by the same God. We are family. Every life has meaning, and nobody should be discriminated because of the color of their skin.

"... where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:11, MEV).

If I'm honest, I think I'm just fed up with people not acknowledging the fact that racism is an obvious issue in our country, especially those who have influence within Christian culture but remain silent because they don't want to be seen as controversial. Racism isn't controversial, it's just wrong.

Trust me, I've been that guy for a long time but I'm starting to change dramatically. I'm not going to do things perfectly, but I'm still going to try. Why? Because I'd rather be deemed controversial than let my silence be conveyed as pacifism or purposeful ignorance as it pertains to racial discrimination and affliction.

"I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We as Christians are called to stand up against injustice no matter where it's from or what it looks like. One of the most purposely ignorant things we can do as humans would be to ignore the reality of racism in our country. The local church should be forerunners in the journey toward reconciliation and examples as to how we are to love one another without limitation.

I'm sorry it took me this long to admit my faults as a white pastor/individual living in a multi-ethnic world.

"God's desire is for us to experience multi-ethnic fellowship now in the local church as it will be for eternity. God's heart is total reconciliation."—Derwin L. Gray (The High-Definition Leader: Building Multiethnic Churches in a Multiethnic World){[eo](#)}

Jarrid Wilson is a husband, pastor and author relentlessly sharing the love of Jesus. For the original article, visit [.](#)

For the original article, visit [.](#)