

The 11th (and Deadly) Issue Dividing Christians

Soon after word came out that a grand jury would not indict Ferguson, Missouri police Officer Darren Wilson in the death of Michael Brown, protests erupted in the streets. It was little surprise when a similar reaction followed another grand jury's declining soon thereafter to indict New York City police officer Daniel Pantaleo in the choke-hold death of Eric Garner.

A common denominator in both instances was race, with both police officers being Caucasian and both men who were killed African-American. The events have served to ignite racial tensions nationwide, with many considering both killings to have had racial underpinnings.

Religion and culture expert *Dr. Alex McFarland*, author of the book *10 Issues that Divide Christians*, says that sadly, even many Christians have been pulled into the racial divide, and he suggests race may be an "11th issue" that divides Christians.

"The recent eruption of protests in our streets is not something to be celebrated but something to be mourned, because it indicates the deep racial divide that still exists in America today," McFarland said. "While we hear many Christian leaders of all races calling for racial reconciliation, we also see some religious leaders fanning the flames of racial tension and other Christian leaders seemingly in denial that such tension is still very prevalent in America and the wounds of racial discrimination still very deep.

"As Christians, we are called to be one in Christ. That was Jesus' prayer in John 17 just before he was crucified, when he prayed to God the Father, 'that they may be one as we are

one.' Scripture is also very clear in Romans 10:12, Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 that in Christ there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. Instead, we who are in Christ are one in Him. In Ephesians 2, we read that those who were once separate from Christ have been brought near, and Jesus who is our peace has destroyed the wall of partition. And in 2 Corinthians 5, we read that believers have been given the message of reconciliation. The core meaning of this is reconciliation with God, but the scriptural outgrowth of this reconciliation is reconciliation with our brothers and sisters of all races in Christ."

McFarland added that while common issues that divide Christians include social justice, abortion, homosexuality and the role of government, race is actually an unspoken issue that divides many believers.

"Rare is the person who will stand up and admit to feelings of racism," McFarland continued. "But it's the responsibility of all Christians to truly examine themselves—their attitudes, perceptions, assumptions and reactions—to seek to identify any undercurrents of racial discrimination that may exist. And when we identify them, it is our absolute responsibility to repent of them and ask God to help us live in the truth of His Word, where all have been called equally to the throne of grace.

"As Christians of every race, we have not simply the opportunity but also the responsibility to reject falling into the trap of racial 'cliques', which serve only to divide, and instead to take a focused stand for the reconciliation to which God has called us, and for which we will be held accountable."

McFarland is the author of 16 books, including his latest, *10 Issues That Divide Christians*, which calls Christ-followers to drill-down to the biblical core of 10 current issues, including abortion. Only by engaging the Scriptures deeply,

thinking clearly and speaking truthfully can those in God's family address their differences and discover the peace that comes with unity of purpose.

With the Bible as a guidebook and the Holy Spirit as the guide, Christians can respond to today's urgent questions with the mind of Christ. Each chapter of *10 Issues That Divide Christians* also offers readers a resource list called "The Deep End of the Knowledge Pool" so they can dig deeper on one or more topics.