

Working for Racial Unity and Reconciliation

Part 1

Thesis: We need to do better as a country. It is not enough to say that I am not racist. We are called to work for justice, to pursue mercy, and to work humbly toward overcoming oppression, especially of black people.

Text: Isaiah 1:17; 58:5-12; Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:31-40; Luke 10:25-37; Luke 18:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Romans 12:9-21

I want to share what I am thinking, feeling, and doing in the midst of the racial and cultural divide in our nation. We need to do better as a country. It is not enough to say that I am not racist. We are called to work for justice, to pursue mercy, and to work humbly toward overcoming oppression, especially of black people.

I want to start with 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, because I believe in Jesus, in his leadership, and in his power to reconcile all things to God, including heaven, earth, and people. It is through the help, hope, and leadership of Jesus that we can work effectively toward racial unity and reconciliation.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view [or after the flesh]. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:14-21 NIV).

Summary: Christ's love compels us. We no longer regard others from a worldly point of view. We are changed. We are new creations in Christ. And, we are part of his new creation work in the world through his reconciling ministry and message. This revelation in Jesus is foundational to working for racial unity and reconciliation.

This is what I currently think and believe.

1. **I believe that we need to acknowledge that there is systemic injustice in our nation against blacks.**
 - a. If you don't know that there is systemic injustice and racism in our country against blacks for 400 years, **then please get informed.** Before you ask a person of color about their experiences, please do the work to educate yourself. Then, ask questions within relationships that feel safe and do so respectfully.
 - b. **Here are some resources to help you get informed.**
 - i. Doug Stringer of Somebody Cares America recently hosted and recorded a [conversation](#) where several African American Pastors shared their experiences with and understanding of racism and systemic injustice in our nation. It was profound and humbling.
 - ii. Here is a short video on [Systemic Injustice](#).
 - iii. This article captures the heartbeat of many black people: [What I Wish White People Understood About Being Black in America](#).
 - iv. [Missiologist Ed Stetzer](#) posted a 5-part series on what it is like to be a minority in America. Here is the link to the start of that series: [Race, Gospel, and Justice: An Interview with Esau McCaulley, Part 1](#).
 - v. [Bryant Lee posted on Facebook](#) about his experience with racism and social injustice. Bryant is a pastor, a husband, a father, a decorated veteran, a follower of Jesus, a past Moderator of the Union Baptist Association, and someone I know and have worked with. What he experienced should never happen one time to a person, let alone four times. (I have included this post as an addendum to my sermon notes if you need it.)
 - c. We need to get informed.
 - d. We need to learn.
 - e. We need to listen.
 - i. By the way, there are skills for listening well.
 1. If you listen in order to correct or debate, that is not listening well.
 2. If you get defensive or think about what you are going to say before the person stops sharing, that is not listening well.
 - ii. Listen to what Dr. Mark Henry, Superintendent of CFISD, shared recently: "Something I have shared with our graduating seniors this week is that for those of us who have not experienced discrimination, the most important thing we can do is listen to others. Just because we haven't experienced discrimination

doesn't mean it doesn't exist. I don't need to tell you how you should think; I need to listen to how you feel."

- f. We need to care about what has happened in the past and what is happening currently.
- g. We need to express love and support for our black brothers and sisters.
 - i. Ask them what they need to hear from you or what you can do for them. That is loving well.
 - ii. Don't make assumptions about what they need.
 - iii. Don't bombard them with a thousand questions and comments without getting informed first.
- h. **The prophets of the Old Testament stood up and held up a mirror to the people of God.**
 - i. **They said:** "This is wrong. We have to stop oppression. We have to stop injustice. We have to treat others lovingly and righteously."
 - ii. *Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause (Isaiah 1:17 ESV).*
 - iii. *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8 ESV).*
- i. **Jesus and the writers of the New Testament told us how to show up well in our spheres of influence and in our culture** (Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25:31-40; Romans 12:9-21).
 - i. *Luke 10:25-37 NIV.*
 1. Pay attention: open our eyes and see others around us.
 2. Have pity and compassion for others.
 3. Go to where others are hurting and in need.
 4. Care for others as you can.
 5. Provide transportation or other needs as you can.
 6. Take responsibility to help as you can.
 7. Support ministries and organizations (inns) that provide care and love (like SomebodyCares.org).
 8. Follow through and follow up.
 - ii. *Matthew 25:31-40 NIV.*
 1. We are called to serve the poor, the marginalized, and those in need.
 2. To work for the common good.
 3. And to restore individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God's intended design.
 - iii. *Romans 12:9-21 NIV.*

Ministry Time:

1. **This message is hard for some of us to hear.**
 - a. Some of us are experiencing guilt, fear, and/or pain.
 - b. Some of us who have experienced our own trauma are getting triggered again because of the abuse, harassment, or oppression we have experienced.
 - c. Some of us are angry and just want to do something to fix things.
2. **This sermon today is only part 1.**
 - a. I have 10 more points to share about what I am currently thinking, feeling, and doing in the midst of the racial and cultural divide in our nation.
 - b. I plan to share some of the beliefs which are sustaining me, informing me, and helping me to live in faith, rather than in hopelessness and despair. These beliefs help me to live in the hope-filled presence of the Lord rather than in despair.
 - c. I will also address the question: What can we do going forward?
3. **Right now, I ask you to hold up your heart to the Lord.**
 - a. Ask the Lord to touch you.
 - b. Ask the Lord to help you.
 - c. Ask the Lord to speak to you.
 - d. Ask the Lord to protect you from despair and hopelessness.
 - e. Ask the Lord to protect you from launching out and doing your own thing out of compulsion rather than out of calling.
 - f. Ask the Lord to help you see what he sees and to feel what he feels and to pray as he leads (Matthew 9:35-38).
4. **Finally, I ask you to check out some resources I included in my sermon notes to help you get informed.**
 - a. I want to especially ask you to take the time to listen to the [conversation hosted by Doug Stringer](#).
 - b. Let's spend this week in the presence of the Lord, in prayer, in listening, and in learning.
 - c. Take time to reflect on the passages of Scripture which I shared with you in this message.
 - d. We will come back next week and talk more about where we go from here.

[Bryant Lee](#)

May 30 at 1:20 AM

Editors note: [Bryant Lee posted on Facebook](#) about his experience with racism and social injustice. Bryant is a pastor, a husband, a father, a decorated veteran, a follower of Jesus, a past Moderator of the Union Baptist Association, and someone I know and have worked with. What he experienced should never happen one time to a person, let alone four times.

I'm up, can't sleep, every time I close my eyes, I see him, pleading, begging "I can't breathe, I can't breathe". Then I picture myself there in the same position he was in, however I see it though the different seasons of my life.

I see myself back in the elementary school playground chasing friends in a tag you're it school yard game. Then without warning I see him (police officer) asking us what are you boys doing, I speak up playing tag officer and within seconds I'm on the ground uttering the words "I can't breathe".

I see me as a teenager leaving the park after a baseball practice, bat, ball and glove in hand, when they (the police) pull up next to me and ask where are you going, where have you been, before I can respond I on the ground thinking did I say something wrong, did I have a wrong look, what did I do this morning that ended up with me saying "I can't breathe"?

I see myself in full military uniform with all my medals to include two bronze stars, on one lapel of my dress coat is the insignia of the United States, my chest out, head up, shoes shine, a proud member of the United States Armed Forces. I can see them (police) in my rear-view mirror, I check my speed, then I see the lights, so I pull over, I'm thinking here we go again. They call from the load speaker roll down the window and stick your hands out of the car, they flank the car, then ask, is this your car, do you have insurance, can we search it, will you step out of the car? I ask questions why did you pull me over and just like that there I am staring at the ground saying "I can't breathe"!

It's early Sunday morning, I got up with my mind on Jesus, I will admit I was driving a little over the speed limit, but it's Sunday morning, Praise is in the air and Kirk is singing, I just wanna be happy, I see them drive by my heart races, then I see them make the u-turn, I just pullover thinking you caught me speeding headed to church. I'm dressed in my usually shirt, blazer and slacks, my bible on the dash, here they come, do you know how fast I clocked you; yes sir that's why I pulled over, those few words sparked something and before I know it there I am on the ground saying "I can't breathe"

You see each time I dose off I see Brother George Floyd, saying I can't breathe, I can't breathe and every time I see him, I see me.

Why this post, why now because all we want is to be treated like human beings created in the image of God, and what do we want them (police) to hear when you encounter us is this "LET US BREATHE"!

A friend of Bryant's posted:

Mentally walking a mile in someone else's shoes in times like these can provoke heartfelt compassion, which is what I want to act and speak from. Most of us can't influence the rioting and unrest that is happening and may well continue. So what can we do? Ignore clowns, haters, and bots on social media, exercise caution and wisdom in what we ourselves say online, refuse hopelessness and jadedness, and love the real people in front of us. For those with the heart to do so, we can also advocate for righteousness, justice (including the racial justice/reconciliation issues we have in our country,) and peace in Jesus name. Micah 6:8.