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**DAILY  
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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# God's Vision

October 26, 2020

When I was growing up, my mental image of Jesus was of a fair-skinned, blue-eyed man with light brown or blond hair. I had no idea that Jesus looked nothing like me. All around the world are images of Jesus that reflect the skin color and physical characteristics of that culture. There are images of a Chinese Jesus in China, a white Jesus in much of the Western world, a black Jesus in Africa and black communities around the world, and every color in between. However, when it comes down to it, Jesus was a Jewish Galilean man. He probably had dark hair, brown skin, and dark eyes. Why does each culture's image of Jesus reflect its own appearance?

We live in a world full of beautiful colors and diversity. We love to tout that we are colorblind and love all people. It's easy to imagine ourself arm in arm with a person who looks different than we do, praising Jesus; however, when we look around, we see that those close to us are most like us. Why is this so often true?

It's hard to open our lives to someone who is different than we are. It's so much more comfortable to stick with what we know. We naturally want to be around people who make us feel good about ourselves and don't challenge our worldviews. We don't want people to make us uncomfortable, thus we stick with those we consider "safe." But Jesus wasn't safe, and he never called us to live a safe life. He called us to be revolutionary and to break down the walls that divide us. Only when we become one church can we unite under Jesus and live out his calling for our lives.

## **Ephesians 2:20-22**

*<sup>20</sup> Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. <sup>21</sup> We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. <sup>22</sup> Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.*

According to this passage, we as Americans—no matter what our race—were not in his house until Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection, brought us in. The Jews hated the Gentiles. There was no room in their lives for people who were not of the Jewish faith. But Jesus changed that. He broke down the walls of hostility and hatred. He defeated every barrier that keeps us from unity.

## **Ephesians 2:14**

*For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.*

### ***We are one in Christ.***

Your ethnicity is part of who you are. It is not something that you chose or can change. There is no guilt or shame in how you were created. God in his sovereignty saw fit to create a world full of many colors. We are all made in the image of God, so maybe it is fitting that the people of every culture see themselves in their own image of Jesus.

Join us over the next four days as we continue our discussion on racial unity and the barriers of pride, fear, hurt, and hopelessness that keep us from achieving it.

### **Questions:**

How do you view your ethnicity? How willing are you to step outside your personal comfort zone to embrace those who do not look or act like you?

### **Next Steps:**

Seek out an opportunity this week to show the love of Jesus to someone who does not look or act like you.

### **Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the beautiful diversity you have created in our world. Thank you for being counter cultural and breaking down the barriers in your world. Give us eyes to see the ways that we give preference to those who look and act like us. Help us have courage to step out of our comfort zone and love others as you have loved us. Amen.*

*This post was written by Julie Mabus, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.*

# In Living Color(s)

October 27, 2020

I remember, as a child, not knowing I was brown until it was pointed out to me. I was maybe six years old and very confused! I didn't see color at all! Ever since, that's all I have been able to see—not in a negative way, but it is highlighted in everything. Babydolls, movies, TV shows, commercials ... they all lack the same thing: *color*. The color I see every day.

Why is that?!

Fashion is based on the entire concept of color, yet the color that naturally drapes a person's skin is somehow taboo or wrong in some sense. Is there a right color or a wrong color? Absolutely not. Because God made each and every color, and he makes no mistakes.

So why are there thoughts of one color being better than the others? The first reason that comes to my mind is pride. Pride is what gives the idea that something is "lesser than" or "greater than." Pride is what causes division and wrong-sided thinking. It is a barrier to racial unity. Proverbs 13:10 states "pride leads to conflict." God does not want us to be in conflict over his creation.

## **James 4:6-7 (NKJV)**

*But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

As a woman of color, I have experienced several times the discomfort of people who were not accustomed to diversity. I have been at the receiving end of shocked reactions when I speak or when discussing my credentials. I've been asked by complete strangers if they can touch my, or my daughter's, hair. (I really don't get that one!) It doesn't offend me, but it definitely baffles me most times. Am I so different? Is my curly hair really that foreign? Am I supposed to be dangerous or frightful because I am bronzed-skinned? Aren't we all God's creation, fearfully and wonderfully made in his image?

## **Philippians 2:3-6**

*<sup>3</sup> Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. <sup>5</sup> You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*

<sup>6</sup> *Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.*

I was blessed to grow up in a very diverse community, and most of my friends are outside of my race. I am thankful for these relationships and our openness to ask questions of each other . There is a willingness and desire to learn about each other's races and cultures. These conversations break down barriers and allow us to grow true and loving connections.

### **Philippians 2:7**

*Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave.*

By going to the cross, Jesus gave us the ultimate example of humility. He gave up what was rightfully his and put others first to the point of giving up his life for them. When we live in humility, following Jesus' example, we remove the barrier of pride.

### **Questions:**

How can you take time to learn about races other than your own? What personal biases do you think you may have that could lead you to think of yourself as better than someone else?

How does Jesus' example of humility teach us to break through our pride?

### **Next Steps:**

Recognize that God is the creator, and he made no mistakes when he made his children in every color. Let God allow you to see the world as he desires, in living color.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear Lord, thank you for loving us and making us in your image. Each and every color is perfectly and expertly designed by you. Open our hearts to your grace and love for our neighbor. Let our eyes see as you would have us see, and let our hearts receive the same. In Jesus' name, amen!*

*This post was written by TréVe Carter, a regular contributor to the LivingitOut.*

# Fear Not

October 28, 2020

This past weekend, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder facilitated a roundtable discussion as we continued our series *The Great Divide* with a message on racial unity. This topic is ripped right from today's headlines. (I feel blessed that our church is willing to discuss complex issues and equip us with Biblical truths.) Ben discussed four barriers that keep us from racial unity. Today, we will concentrate on the second barrier—*fear*.

Fear is one of the most powerful human emotions. But where does fear come from? It can come from being in real danger, like when a car is speeding right toward you, from a physically abusive spouse, or when a sick (and seemingly contagious) person is in close proximity. Fear can also come from imagined danger, like uncertainty, the thought of what could happen if I say or do something that will offend others, or all the other “what ifs” that exist only in our minds.

One example of this comes from an article written by Gwynne Dyer. In it, he writes that “fear is at the root of America's race problem.” He continues, “many white Americans believe, consciously or subconsciously, that African-Americans are intrinsically dangerous.” This example of imagined danger does not bode well for racial unity. Any imagined danger from one race toward another is an unacceptable wall that needs to be broken down.

Handling our fear response can go beyond the actual fear itself—it can take on a life of its own. Ben discussed some ways people deal with fear, such as avoidance, hiding, putting up a wall to remain comfortable, or keeping a distance from the situation. However, fear is not where Jesus wants us to be.

## **Isaiah 43:1**

*But now, O Jacob, listen to the Lord who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, “Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine.”*

This was not only a comforting promise to the Jewish nation in Biblical times but is also comforting for us today, because we too are created by the Lord. The phrase “do not be afraid” is mentioned 365 times in the Bible—the same number as there are days in a year. Coincidence? I think not.

Simply put, “fear not” because the barrier of fear is conquered by the resurrection. God made a way. He defeated evil so that we have nothing to fear.

**Ephesians 2:17**

*He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near.*

God intervened and brought peace to Jews and Gentiles, and he does the same for us. This peace gives us the courage to step into difficult conversations and situations, and it removes the fear.

**Questions:**

How do you handle fear? Do you avoid it or face it? How does the way you handle fear affect your daily life?

**Next Steps:**

Think about a time you were faced with an imaginary fear. How did you respond? Now journal how you should have responded. Then mindfully meditate on [Isaiah 43:1](#). Wholeheartedly believe that God created you in Jesus and redeemed you through grace.

**Prayer:**

*Dear Father in heaven, thank you for sending your Son to perish on the cross for our sins. Thank you for all your promises, as a loving shepherd to all your sheep. Thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit to help us fight against fear. Thank you for creating all people in your image regardless of skin color. Please grant our nation the wisdom needed to break down the barriers of fear and live with racial unity. In your Son's name we pray, amen.*

# Band-Aid

October 29, 2020

This week, we are continuing our series *The Great Divide* with a message of racial unity. Today, we will cover the third barrier that can keep us from racial unity—*hurt*.

My daughter asked me what I was writing about, and when I told her racial unity, she asked if I was qualified. I admit, I have not encountered a great deal of racial diversity. In fact, my children's circles are much more diverse than mine, and I admire them for that. But I have experienced today's topic, hurt, as I'm sure you have too.

We have all been wounded by someone along the way or had a bad experience. It hurts, and we all respond to that hurt a little differently. I know my response to being hurt is often to withdraw. When I'm hurt, I usually run away, suck it up, and pretend it never happened. This frequently results in a festering of bad emotions and ends in a blowup!

How do you handle getting hurt or being offended?

Did one (or a few) bad actors become *all*? Some of us respond to one person hurting us by blaming everyone who is similar—ALL men, ALL women, ALL Black, ALL White, and so on. Think about the political situation in our country. Many of us are blaming all Republicans, all Democrats, all conservatives, or all liberals. In reality, our failure to place ourselves in our neighbors' shoes, to better understand their perspectives, may be keeping us from unity, particularly racial unity. Being exposed to different situations and getting to know people who are "different" than you can go a long way in bringing about unity.

Some of us respond to getting hurt by putting up a wall of protection so that it doesn't happen again. The wall may be physical, such as distance, like moving away. Or it may be emotional, such as not interacting with someone or withdrawing altogether.

Regardless of how we've responded in the past, the breakthrough to the barrier of hurt is *family*. **God's family.**

## **Ephesians 2:18-19**

*<sup>18</sup> Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. <sup>19</sup> So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.*

No matter what hurt we have experienced in our lives, God invites us into a place of love, security, and purpose. We can come to the Father, receive God's grace and healing, and in return, extend that grace to others.

### **Questions:**

When was the last time you were hurt? How did you react? How could you have reacted differently, showing Christ's love?

### **NextSteps:**

The next time someone hurts you, think before you react! Show them love! Try to expand your "circle" to include others who are different from you.

Examine the hurts in your life. Give them to God, and ask him to restore you. Listen and sing these words from the song "[Breakthrough](#)" by Red Rocks Worship. "You alone can take my scars. Piece by piece restore my heart. Take what's broken, make it whole again.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear heavenly Father, thank you for all you have done for me. Help me to show your love to others who are different than I am. Amen.*

# Hope In a Time of Despair

October 30, 2020

I'm tough, but I'm not unbreakable. Thankfully, while my body is strong, I understand that the world can make me mentally weak if I don't know God's love. Sometimes, when life leaves you feeling lonely, knowing you're loved by the creator slips your mind. Far too often, this place is cold and unforgiving. Without hope, it's much too easy to shut down and fall into despair. Hopelessness is the fourth barrier to racial unity.

Society has a way of turning our unique differences against us, especially at a young age when our innocence makes us the most vulnerable. I was seven the first time an adult called me the "N" word. I was fifteen when one of my high school principals snatched me by the collar and demanded to know, "What are you doing in my school?" These are only a few events that caused a racial separation in my life. But there were also seeds of hope intermingled: good parents who didn't allow politics or race to keep their children from getting to know the first black kid in their class or neighborhood, and great teachers who looked beyond the cultural biases in the curriculum. Our worlds joined together.

## **Ephesians 2:20-21**

*<sup>20</sup> Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. <sup>21</sup> We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.*

We learned to live, love, learn, and grow together according to God's plan. This unity wasn't achieved by ignoring race. No, it's crucial to understand that being color blind isn't the best response to racism. We give hope to the lost and lonely by seeing them the way God created them. If we move through life together with purpose, we will find a breakthrough to hopelessness.

## **Questions:**

Where are the places God invites us to join together with others—at church, at work, in our neighborhoods? Do you seek to understand the differences in others? Do you attempt to navigate through hopeless situations by yourself?

## **Next Steps:**

Talk to a parent, spouse, teacher, pastor, etc., when you feel hopeless. Bring so-called outsiders into your circle. Pray for ways to use your spiritual gifts to reach

all people. Speak out when you see others being separated, singled out, or ridiculed for their differences.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, allow me to silence my wants to better hear the needs you have for me. Thank you for creating so many people with unique differences. Please help us to continue to learn from one another. Help me to show your love to others, so they feel safe in doing life together. Thank you for your grace. Amen.*

*This post was written by Jaron Camp, a regular contributor to the LivingitOut*