

# RACISM

AND THE IMAGE OF GOD

IPHC STUDENT MINISTRIES RESOURCE BY STEPHEN JONES



## INTRODUCTION:

Not many people I've ever met would say they actually "hate" another person. I don't know if that's just southern taboo or our own sense of what it means to be polite... maybe it's because we know that hatred is wrong, but regardless of the reason, it's rare that I ever hear someone say, "I hate (and then say the name of another person)."

Most people I encounter will say something like, "Hate is a strong word," and they don't use it when referring to people... However, they will typically follow that sentence with something like, "BUT, I REALLY DON'T LIKE THEM." ... What is it about people that we don't like? How is that different than "hate?"

Is hatred always actively hostile and aggressive, or can it be more deceptive? It's possible for us to recognize that hate is a strong word, and even refuse to use that word, and still carry around hatred in our hearts. I think that's what we're seeing in our society today. People condemn white supremacy, but how many of us are willing to admit our own dislike of other ethnicities, people groups, and cultures?

There is so much conflict and racial division in our culture, in our news, in our daily interactions—how do we deal with so much hate?

## PRIMARY SCRIPTURES:

**Genesis 1:26-28:** "26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

**Genesis 3:20:** "20 Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living."

**Ephesians 2:10:** "10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

## SECONDARY STUDIES:

**Acts 17:24-27:** "24 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us."

**1 John 3:10-18:** "10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. 11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, who

was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."

## **CENTRAL TRUTH:**

God created all mankind in His image to reflect Himself to all creation.

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS ("TAKE-AWAY" TRUTHS):**

- The Image of God present in every human makes us all equal before Him.
- Loving one another requires action; anything less than actively loving others is less than obedience to Christ's command.

## **MAIN IDEAS FROM THE TEXTS:**

1. All of Humanity shares a common Image.
  - God crafted humanity to "look" like Him. (Genesis 1:26)
  - By virtue of His image, humans are **FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT** than the rest of creation. (Genesis 1:27)
2. All of Humanity shares a common Ancestor.
  - Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:20)
  - Noah, and his sons (Genesis 9:19)
3. All of Humanity shares a common Purpose.
  - Procreation – "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, ..." (Genesis 1:28)
  - Dominion – "...and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth..." (Genesis 1:28-31)

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Humanity represents the pinnacle of creation, the finale of God's creative efforts.
- The original Hebrew of the text is written in poetic form, designed to inspire the reader with God's greatness and His power.
- God's creative process started with the creation of "Kingdoms," and then ended with "populating" those kingdoms.
  - Day One – Evening and Morning (Genesis 1:3-5)
  - Day Two – the Heavens (Genesis 1:6-8)
  - Day Three – the Oceans and Dry Land (Genesis 1:9-13)

- Day Four – the Greater and Lesser Lights (Genesis 1:14-19)
- Day Five – the Birds and Winged Creatures (Genesis 1:20-23)
- Day Six – the Cattle, Creeping things, and Beasts of the Earth, and Humanity created in God’s Image (Genesis 1:24-25)
- Day Seven – God Rested from His Creative work. (Genesis 2:1-3)
- Humanity is the only living creature created by God’s own hands, not strictly by His words.
- Humanity is the only creation that God considered very good, not just good. (Genesis 1:31)
- Humanity represents God to all of creation—
  - By virtue of His Image in us.
  - By virtue of His Assignment to us.
- Humanity is the only living creature described as having been made in the image of God.
- The image of God was not limited to one gender—“male and female, He created them.”

## TEACHING HINTS AND APPLICATIONS:

- Racism is real. Racism is, at its core, a hatred of other people on the basis of different physical characteristics.
- Scripture teaches us that we all have one common ancestor, that we are all made in the image of God, and that our outward differences are not the final indicators of our worth in the eyes of God.
- Prejudice is real. Prejudice is not just about treating others differently on the basis of skin color; prejudice is about treating people on the basis of YOUR preferences...
- How we treat other people says more about who we are than who they are.
- We cannot defeat racism, prejudice, or hatred for others by giving one people group or ethnicity advantages or privileges over others.
- We defeat hatred, prejudice, and racism by looking at people through the eyes of God’s word, by seeing His image in them first, and treating them with the dignity that His Image deserves.
- We defeat hatred, prejudice, and racism by loving other people the way that Christ loved us—that kind of love is active.
- When we look to the cross, the greatest example of love we’ve ever seen, we realize there is no such thing as a passive love.
- Therefore, if we do not actively love people around us, then what exactly are we doing?

## ILLUSTRATIONS/MULTIMEDIA:

- Few of us would ever arbitrarily choose to hate people the way he did...
  - How the Grinch Stole Christmas, “Hate Scene”  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86jbnMOAcy0>)
- This clip, as reflective of a true story, is especially heart-breaking as you hear how petty people can be with regard to their preconceived notions and preferences for outward appearances...
  - Hotel Rwanda, “The Difference between Hutus and Tutsis”  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TOSq9a8Hc8>)

- Racism in America was once institutionalized, and a glimpse into the not-so-distant past shows that prejudice and hate were widespread and engrained in our culture, and how only recently we came to our senses. This one phrase from a court-case in the late 1800's stands out as a horrifying example of passivity when it comes to other Image-Bearers.
  - "Separate, but equal," Plessy vs. Ferguson, and Brown vs. Board of Education

## **SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS**

1. Do you hear many people use the word "hate" sincerely when they speak of other people?
2. Do you ever use the word "hate" yourself when you speak about others? Why, or why not?
3. In what contexts do you think it's ok to say, "I Hate...?"
4. What defines hate?
5. What is the difference between hate and prejudice?
6. What is your first memory of becoming aware of race?
7. Have you ever been in a room where you were the racial minority? How did that make you feel?
8. If we aren't actively hating someone, does that mean we love them?
9. If we aren't actively loving someone, does that mean we hate them?
10. What was Christ's command to His disciples that taught them how they should treat others?
11. How did Christ say others would be able to recognize His followers?
12. In what ways do we encounter prejudice and racism on a daily basis? How do we respond?