

Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

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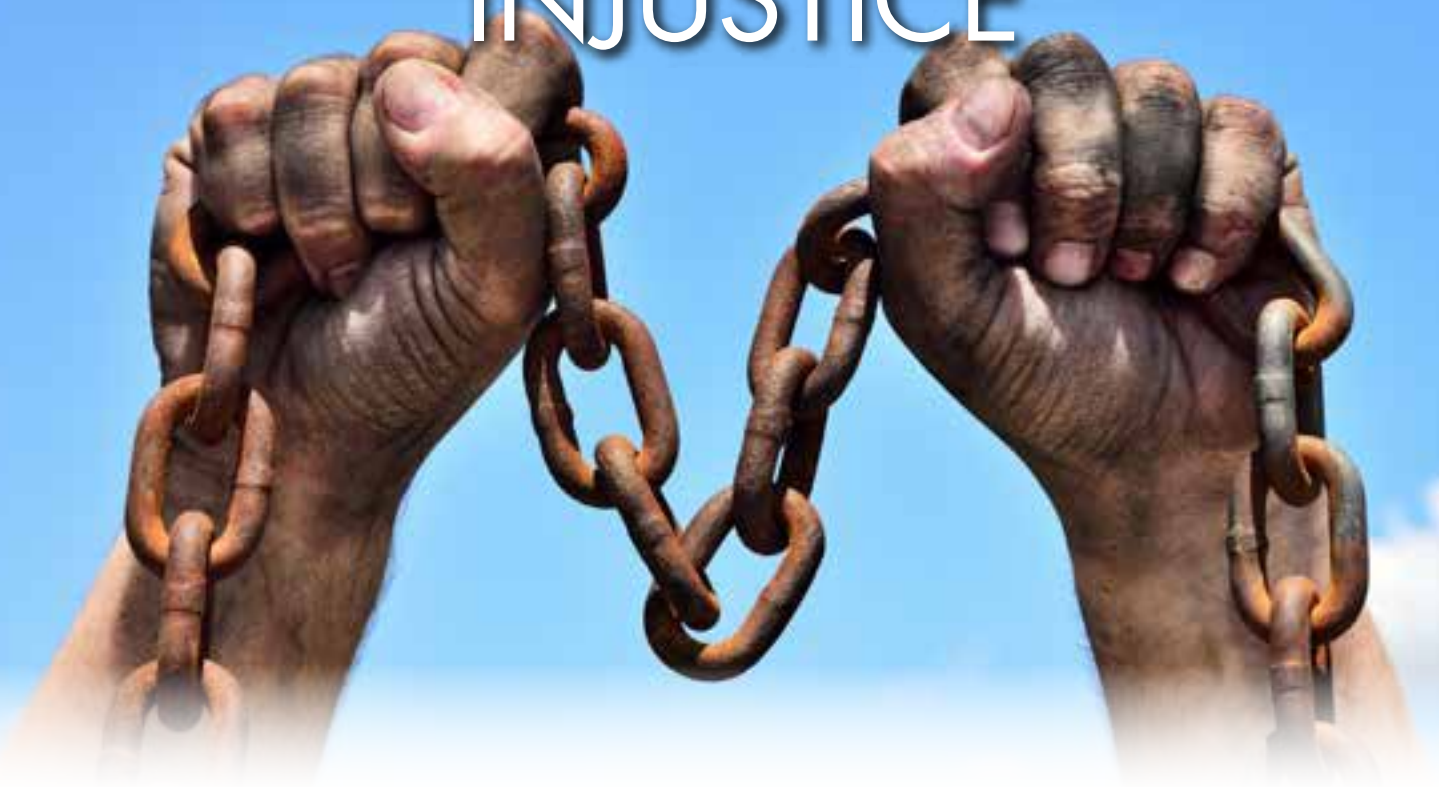
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It's Time to End 400 Years of INJUSTICE



This year marks the 400th anniversary of the roots of slavery in our country.



BY DOUG
BEACHAM

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The Joseph narrative in Genesis describes the ascent of Joseph, an Israelite, from a dungeon to the highest political positions in Egypt. With almost absolute economic control of Egypt, Joseph led the kingdom through a severe crisis.

Through his leadership, Joseph also saved his father Jacob and his brothers. For a season during and after Joseph's death, Israelites prospered in number and resources in Egypt.

But things changed. Exodus 1:8 tells us: "There arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph." This lack of knowledge was more than personal acquaintance. It reflected the lapse of national memory about the role Joseph and the Israelites previously played in the nation.

Instead of policies based on memorial appreciation, fear was the force that shaped new policies. No doubt over time, the dehumanizing patterns of fear led to loss of dignity and position, then to shame, then to public outcry against a group that was different, and finally to the enslavement of the Israelites.

The Israelites were afflicted in Egypt for four hundred years (see Genesis 15:13). Exodus 12:40 tells us that the children of Israel sojourned in Egypt for 430 years. This four-hundred-year marker provides the parameters of Israelite population growth and influence in Egypt. It also frames how Joseph could be forgotten.

Over the past year, I have been in several meetings with African-American religious leaders who have talked about The Angela Project. The name reflects the arrival of the first blacks to the English colony of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619.

An article in the [Washington Post](#) gives the historical background to the twenty or so Africans who arrived in Jamestown that year. The name “Angela” reflects the name of a woman from Angola who was identified by that English name in the 1624 census and who arrived in 1619. (Further information can be found in this [article](#).)

The landing of these first Africans in the English colony began a process that ultimately led to full slavery of millions of Africans in the colonies.

Listening to my African-American colleagues and friends, I found myself reflecting on two aspects of this. First, the racial divide in the United States has deep and wide roots. You should read Edward E. Baptist’s book, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, to discern the terrible dehumanizing of Africans that occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries in the United States.

It’s a sad tale of the interconnection of greed, political power, sexual abuse and dehumanizing of millions of people. I read that book two years ago and wrote about it [here](#).

The second aspect occurred in an October 2018 meeting where interracial religious leaders discussed racial injustice. As the quadricentennial of the Jamestown landing loomed before us, I remembered that the children of Israel had been in Egypt four hundred years.

When the Lord spoke to Abraham in Genesis 15 concerning his descendant’s four-hundred-year oppression in Egypt, the Lord promised that He would “judge”

Egypt and that the Israelites would come out of that oppression “with great possessions” (15:14). The word “judge” has the meaning of the Lord contending for and vindicating Israel and striving against Egypt.

I cannot help but think of the American Civil War from 1861 to 1865 as an act of divine judgment upon our entire nation. As *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* phrased it, God “is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored, He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword.” After the war, the nation chose the path of passive-

aggressive oppression of former slaves through discrimination laws, Supreme Court-sanctioned Jim Crow laws (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896), voter restrictive laws, and violence without recourse. Eventually they found legal protection and justice.

So here we are, four hundred years and counting. I have

learned how difficult it is for me, as a white American, to understand how slavery’s roots continue to impact African-Americans, and by extension, we who are of another color. I’m still learning how systemic policies and practices often work against blacks in ways I can hardly imagine.

I write this because (1) it is Black History Month in the United States, and (2) our core value of justice is heavy on my heart. There are not easy solutions, but I must believe that the power of Christ and His love is able to bring healing and hope to all of us.

We know how the Exodus story concluded. The Hebrew slaves of Egypt were delivered and they

“May we listen to one another, may we worship with one another, may we play and fellowship with one another.”

Encourage

A place of hope. A people of promise.

February 2019

Vol. 6 No. 2

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Encourage is published monthly except in July and December by the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, P.O. Box 12609, Oklahoma City, OK 73157. Digital subscriptions are available free of charge by subscribing at iphc.org/connect. Images courtesy of thinkstockphotos.com unless otherwise noted.

journeyed to the Promised Land. We also know that for African-Americans, the Exodus story of the Biblical text has been a foundation of hope for generations.

In a sense, the Civil War was the “Red Sea” crossing for African-Americans, at least in my perspective. But just as Israel wandered in the wilderness, there are many who continue to wander in the modern wilderness of our history and society.

My prayer for the IPHC this year is that in our nation and around the globe we will experience grace-filled and hope-filled lives that enable us to walk hand in hand with anyone God places in our path—regardless of race. May we listen to one another, may we worship with one another, may we play and fellowship with one another.

And may all of us discover the joy of tasting Christ’s kingdom now. Four hundred years is upon us. Let’s work together to change the future. ☐

Understanding Both Sides of **BIBLICAL JUSTICE**

We must dig deeper in God's Word
to see how God wants us to fight injustice.



BY RYAN T.
JACKSON

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In Lady Justice's most popular form, she appears blindfolded to signify that justice is impartial. Evidence is simply weighed in her balance, and the decision goes in whatever direction the weight falls. The sword reminds us that justice is to be enforced authoritatively. All of these concepts are valid ways to think about justice, but the Bible gives us a much richer picture which both expands on these concepts and balances them.

Scripture certainly embraces the concepts of fairness and accountability depicted by Lady Justice, but it reveals more about the nature of justice than the famous statue. According to Tim Keller, author of *Generous Justice*, there are at least two major concepts of justice referenced in the Hebrew Bible— what we might call *primary* justice and *rectifying* justice.

Rectifying justice is represented in passages like Micah 6:8. The Hebrew term for justice in this verse (*mishpat*) can be used in reference to something akin to the forensic emphasis depicted by Lady Justice. However, in its biblical context, justice is administered not solely through the sword but from a posture of loving kindness (*chesed*), which seeks equity and biblical peace (*shalom*).

Primary justice is demonstrated by a different Hebrew term: *tzadeqah* (see Amos 5:24). *Tzadeqah* is frequently translated as “righteousness,” but it is essentially a way of speaking about God's goal of keeping things in appropriate order within his creation in a way that accomplishes his redemptive purposes.

Rectifying justice (*mishpat*) is about responding to wrongs through punishment of the culprits and protection of the casualties. Primary justice (*tzadekah*) is about keeping things in right order in relationship to God and others. If primary justice were enacted, there would be little if any need for rectifying justice at all.

The world is very interested in justice, but the type of justice people are interested in can be influenced by where they are on the political spectrum. If they are politically conservative, they might associate justice with more strict punishment or a focus on personal responsibility and ethics. If they are politically liberal, they might think of justice in reference to dealing with structures that perpetuate inequality.

Before we hasten to judge, we should note that the church follows a similar pattern by focusing on different sets of sins. Whereas conservative churches might focus more on sexual ethics and traditional morality, liberal churches might focus more on the sins of oppression and inequality. Conservative churches tend to view the gospel primarily as a spiritual reality that calls for conversion of sinners. Liberal churches tend to view the gospel primarily as a social reality that calls for commitment to social justice.

In truth, Jesus did not focus on one type of justice to the exclusion of the other. He held them together in symbiotic relationship. He demanded spiritual and moral transformation, but He insisted that transformation would impact how we care for others.

Jesus' refusal to separate physical from spiritual needs was a reflection of the Old Testament prophetic stance (Isaiah 1:17). This theme appears throughout Isaiah's prophecies and surfaces in Isaiah 58 in a powerful exhortation of religious ritual that neglects to deal with injustice and oppression. In no uncertain terms, Isaiah decried any so-called spirituality that does not take up the cause of the oppressed.

Jesus takes up the same theme in His own teaching when time and time again He challenges the religious elite for their attentiveness to the law and simultaneous deafness to the cries of the poor and needy (see Matthew 23:23). This reality is portrayed in vivid detail in the striking commentary on justice in Matthew 25. Jesus tells a parable of the final judgment in which people from all the nations will be gathered before Him, separated as sheep from goats and judged accordingly.

The sheep demonstrated care for the needy. The goats were concerned only with themselves. Jesus so identified with the oppressed that He interpreted the actions of the sheep and the goats as an indication of how they treated Him!

The sheep were surprised at their commendation and the goats were surprised at their condemnation! They were both surprised because they simply acted in accordance with their true nature. Jesus taught that justice flows naturally from the hearts of those who are his true followers, and He takes our concern for the vulnerable of society very seriously. Biblical justice does involve rectification, but it also encompasses keeping relationships with God and others ordered according to His redemptive plan.

Nowhere is this balance clearer than in the interplay between the writings of Paul and James. The apostle Paul was the earliest interpreter of the teaching of Jesus and its implications for the lives of believers. It was Paul who

“Jesus did not focus on one type of justice to the exclusion of the other. He demanded spiritual and moral transformation.”

articulated most clearly the truth that we are saved by grace through faith apart from our works. Paul's letter to the Ephesians makes abundantly clear that salvation is a gift of God that can neither be earned nor deserved (Ephesians 2:8–9).

This is the source of the Reformation doctrine of *sola fide*—salvation by faith alone. Yet, it would be a mistake to understand the “alone” of that doctrinal expression to mean that true faith is not accompanied by action on our part. James clarifies that faith without works is dead (James 2:17, 26). Does this mean that James and Paul are contradictory? Not at all.

What it means is that real saving faith is necessarily *followed* by action. As Martin Luther famously said, “We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.” The kind of faith that saves us is nutrient rich, productive soil for the fruit of the Spirit.

One contemporary application of biblical justice may be seen in the issue of race relations in the United States. On the one hand, there is a focus on the personal responsibility of people to work hard, earn a fair wage, and obey the law. On the other hand, there is a focus on historic injustice and systemic inequalities. The two sides talk past each other and shout over each other from their perches on news programs.

Jesus calls us to think about not just one of these issues, but to think about and act upon both of them. We cannot blame every problem on irresponsibility and personal immorality. Neither can we attribute blame simply to institutional and structural bias. Jesus would affirm that people are personally responsible for their actions. He would also decry structures that perpetuate disadvantage.

Musicians have long noted the principle of sympathetic resonance. When a stringed instrument is perfectly in tune, strings will vibrate in harmonic resonance when other strings are played. Imagine that! The strings are not plucked, strummed, or bowed. Yet, they resonate in harmony when the right note is played.

This principle is a beautiful illustration of how believers respond to the heart of God. When our hearts are aligned with God's heart by his gracious justification of our sins, we resonate with His heart to care for the needs of others. Overwhelmed by amazing grace, we embrace the biblical mandate to resonate with our Father in aligning his world with his merciful will. □



EXAMINE YOURSELF:

Is There Racism In Your Heart?

The church won't be free from racism until its leaders are free from it.



BY
DEMETRIUS
MILES

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As the IPHC focuses this year on one of our core values, “We Prayerfully Value Justice,” it is critically important to begin by acknowledging that racism is alive in some of the churches we lead. We cannot remain silent about this.

I’m not an expert in this area, although I’ve been a catalyst for racial change. Racism has many tentacles, and this article is not exhaustive on the subject. But I’m convinced that one of the primary antidotes to racism is the body of Christ.

As Oklahoma pastor Craig Groeschel has said, racism is not a *skin* issue—it’s a *sin* issue. James 2:9 says it clearly: “But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.” Racism is not just the presence of hatred; it is the absence of love.

When Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, He was addressing the sin of racism in the hearts of the Jewish Pharisees. That story would have made a racist mad! It was the Samaritan—who was despised by the Jews—who did the right thing by showing kindness to the wounded man. Jesus used the story to teach that all people—regardless of race—are our “neighbors.”

Jesus asked the Jews, “Who is my neighbor?” It’s interesting that Jesus doesn’t answer the question; instead He demonstrated how to be a neighbor.

Martin Luther King Jr. preached a famous sermon on this passage. In it, he said: “I imagine that the first question the priest and Levite asked was: ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’ But by the very nature

of his concern, the good Samaritan reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’

The essence of being a Christ-follower is not found in our church experiences, giving records or denominational positions. It is found in our love for God and our neighbors. I am convinced the church is designed to be the answer to the ills of our society, yet we live in this tension of knowing what we have been called to do yet not being properly positioned to carry out our assignment.

It’s challenging for the church to effectively address the issue of racism when racism still cripples the body of Christ. We can’t cast out racism and perpetuate it at the same time. For the church to effectively serve a lost world, we must be healed.

I pray the church will experience a fresh wind of the Holy Spirit that will bring conviction and cause us to repent of the racism in our hearts. I am not limiting racism to a black and white issue; we must tear down every wall of hatred and division.

Here are three questions for you to ponder as we ask God to use the IPHC and the larger body of Christ to be a solution to the injustice of racism.

1. IS THERE ANY PREJUDICE IN YOUR HEART?

Pastors must be careful. Whatever is in our hearts will come through in our preaching. If you have racist attitudes, they will be spread like a virus to your congregation.

1 John 4:20 says: “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.”

Pastors and leaders must examine themselves first. Are you loving God and your neighbor in a way that reflects the heart of God? Are you loving your neighbors equally, or is there prejudice in your heart toward some? The agape love of God flowing out of the heart of His people is our solution to uprooting racism. It must start with you.

2. ARE YOU WILLING TO EMBRACE NEW GROUPS OF PEOPLE?

One of the qualifications of a bishop listed in 1 Timothy 3:2 is “hospitable.” This word in the Greek is *philoxenos*, which means “love of foreigners.” New Testament leaders were required to love those who were not like them! Do you have this quality?

Are you still learning? Do you have the heart of a disciple who wants to learn more about the heart of God? Or are you stuck in your ways—with the attitude that you already know everything?

The world around us is changing. Your city is not the same today as it was in 1975. Are you intentionally learning about other ethnic groups who have moved to your city or your neighborhood? Are you willing to have conversations with those who don’t look like you? Or do you complain about “those people” who are moving near you?

One of the ways we disarm our fears and ignorance of other ethnicities is by initiating conversations. We can learn so much from each other, if we would just talk to each other!

3. HAVE YOU LET GO OF PAST HURTS?

It is so important for you to let go of what has wounded you in the past. This is not easy and can only be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes a pastor can be leading a church and bleeding simultaneously.

You have been called to bring a message of reconciliation. Yet you may be enslaved by past experiences. You may have experienced the injustice of racism, or your parents

may have trained you to perpetuate it. You must break the generational cycle.


Remember the words of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Eph. 4:31-33).

You can’t get free of what you are not willing to confront. Learning to let go of the past requires humility. Break free from unforgiveness, hatred, anger, pride or prejudice and allow the Holy Spirit to bring healing to you. Ask a mentor or trusted friend to pray with you. We don’t have to be controlled by guilt and condemnation.

I hope you are willing to ask the hard questions. Please join me in praying that God will increase the capacity of the IPHC to reach more ethnicities in our nation.

We believe we are being positioned by the year 2033 to experience the greatest harvest of souls in our history. But

many of those souls will be multi-ethnic! If the Lord is stirring your heart to reach more ethnicities, or to become more inclusive, please contact [me](#) and our team for more help and resources. ☐


“We can’t cast out racism and perpetuate it at the same time. For the church to effectively serve a lost world, we must be healed.”



We are one in the Spirit: In Christ there is no racial barrier.

PREPARE NOW to Reach Urban Areas

Population trends in the United States are changing rapidly.
Are you ready for the harvest?



BY MATTHEW
FRETWELL

DR. MATTHEW FRETWELL serves as a revitalization pastor and director of discipleship for the IPHC's Redemption Ministries. He holds an M.A. in Theology, an M.Div. and a D.Min. in Great Commission Reproducible Disciple-Making from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Matt frequently writes about church leadership, planting, revitalization, health, and growth for *Church Planter* magazine, *Biblical Leadership* and *Church Central*. He is married and has three daughters.

As someone who assesses cultural trends, demographics, and global movements, I find it difficult being a visionary and trainer. One of the hardest aspects for “early adopters” is translating what you see coming and getting others to invest in that vision. For the most part, only a small percentage of people are early adopters of vision and even a smaller part are vision casters.

If you are a church planter or pastor and haven't heard the term *diaspora*, you will. If you want to know what is coming to urban churches then studying diaspora movements (and immigration) is essential. One of the major shifts in global population is the flowing dispersion of immigrant people groups. God is sovereignly moving people around the globe like never before.

If we couple that with the influx of hipster urbanites, gentrification and urban renewal, it's a massive powder keg awaiting implosion with inner city churches. They are not prepared for what is coming. The reality is that these churches *will* die out. With the movement of refugees—either fleeing persecution, or temporary visa status—for work—refugees are coming to cities all over the world.

Western churches in urban areas will be *forced* to reach people of ethnicity. It is not that urban churches haven't always tried this—but cities will be more ethnically and culturally diverse than ever. We should know that immigration to the United States is the only cause for population growth today.

Where do the immigrants go? Cities. Without legal immigrants, the United States would not be growing in population, but plateauing or even declining.

Just to clarify, if you're linking immigration with the Hispanic culture, let me help you. Currently, Germany and Ireland are the top two countries with diaspora peoples coming to the United States. Mexico is third, but only by a small portion of one percent, compared to the United Kingdom, which is fourth.

1. How Does This Change Urban Evangelicalism?

Immigration and diaspora models play a huge role with engaging urban areas with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20); as well as, the combined hipster, gentrification, and urban renewal. I've heard it said, "We need to stop mega-churches from "gobbling" up old city churches for satellite campuses because they know nothing about the people in the city, plus there are extant churches available, which can do a better job.

Supposedly, there should not be mega-churches, or any Anglo church planters in urban areas because they are outsiders, they don't understand the culture, and they cannot engage the people. Another argument is Anglo church planters cannot reach African Americans, the prominent majority of urban population. I'll refute that in a moment.

The argument suggests that church planters and mega-churches should solely invest in small "indigenous" churches, working with and beside them. While I would have agreed with this model ten years ago (and to some extent do)—it's as archaic as the tape cassette—well, maybe the CD.

Within the next five to ten years, domestic churches and church planters will be forced to reach across the cultural lines of socio-economic barriers to engage in evangelism. They will first evaluate demographic and ethnic data, because if a church doesn't know who is in its neighborhood, it cannot reach it.

Take a look at any recent urban demographic data and compare it to fifteen years ago. Census reports

won't show the true picture, as many of the people groups living within a city either fail to report

"Urban churches wishing to survive *must* engage foreign people groups. They're here and more are coming."

their true identity or will not report at all (mainly because of privacy, legal issues or fear). Think about the major influx of Islam in just fifteen years and how many mosques are now within your city.

Earlier I stated that I would refute why African-American churches should be the only churches to plant churches or do Great Commission work in urban areas. Why not? The reason is because the advice is antiquated. While I devoutly pray that brothers and sisters in Christ (and all people) would no longer view skin color, the fact is immigration is a game-changer!

African-American culture will be melded into the many ethnic cultures already here and arriving. To reach an entire city it is going to take a concerted effort of all peoples.

Most cities, like Richmond, Virginia (a smaller scaled city) are becoming more and more ethnically diverse: Indian, Asian, Middle Eastern and European. Urban churches wishing to survive *must* engage foreign people groups.

They're here and more are coming.

2 Some Good News for You

First, we have the ability to know, study, engage, meet and communicate with every people group within our cities. I personally know that major missionary organizations are working side-by-side in mapping the nations within cities. This information is available and can assist churches and church planters in engaging urban areas with the gospel. Here's a good resource from [Keelan Cook](#).

Second, the nationalities sometimes have unreached people groups (UPGs) among them. We've seen this here in Richmond, where I live. Many of the refugees will one day desire to go back home. What better way to engage missions than to have UPGs return to "go and make disciples" in their own homeland!

Lastly, churches should be working together, collaboratively, as kingdom workers to reach every city with the gospel. However, this is going to take a multi-pronged approach.

Existing mega-churches should find ways to purchase dying empty church sarcophagi—keeping these "kingdom properties." Targeting areas of resurgent growth and ethnically diversified areas with house churches works well, as a church planting movement may manifest.

Strengthening and revitalizing churches, *which can be saved*, and ones within lower socio-economic areas are a must. Some of these areas may need food dispensaries, job creation, and recovery programs to break chains of poverty. As well, traditional style church planting (having a sending church) and more innovative church planting techniques (parachuting) must be implemented.

We're all on the same team—let's reach our cities and the peoples of the world!



SEVEN WAYS to Break Racial Walls in Your Church

How can your church become more inclusive of all races?
Here are some steps you can take now.



BY J. LEE
GRADY

J. LEE GRADY is an author, traveling minister and former editor of *Charisma* magazine. Author of several books including *10 Lies the Church Tells Women* and *Set My Heart on Fire*, Lee leads The Mordecai Project—a missionary organization that focuses on bringing the healing of Christ to women who are abused and marginalized. Lee has been ordained in the IPHC since 2000, and he and his wife, Deborah, live in LaGrange, Georgia. You can learn more about his ministry at leegrady.com.

Back in mid-2018, Starbucks closed 8,000 of its stores so its famous baristas could undergo four hours of racial sensitivity training. The company took this drastic action to counteract negative publicity it received when two black men were handcuffed and arrested simply because they sat in a Starbucks store in Philadelphia without ordering any coffee.

The ugly incident on April 12, 2018, triggered angry reactions. Some customers began boycotting Starbucks when they learned that a white employee had called Philadelphia police after telling the two men they couldn't use the restroom without buying anything. CEO Kevin Johnson then went on a much-publicized "apology tour" and announced he would give his 175,000 employees a racial sensitivity seminar.

Some people viewed the training as a publicity stunt designed to protect Starbucks—which makes \$14 billion a year in profit—from a customer backlash. Others applauded the company for admitting a serious blind spot.

I'll admit I don't have high hopes that a four-hour seminar will end racism in the United States. Yet when I learned about Starbucks' plan, my first thought was: *Maybe we need to close our churches for a day and do the same thing!* Because racism is alive and well in American congregations—and we need to face it.

If I were going to offer racial sensitivity training to a church, I would include the following steps:

TEACH MORE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Whenever the Holy Spirit shows up, racial barriers fall. The first Pentecost was a multicultural miracle; no one can be called a Pentecostal if he doesn't embrace racial and ethnic diversity. In Acts 10, the Holy Spirit led Peter to preach to a group of Gentiles in Cornelius' house in Caesarea; the first Gentile church was born in that place!

Many churches limit the work of the Holy Spirit's gifts and manifestations. Is it any surprise that churches that quench the Holy Spirit are racially segregated? If you want racial diversity in your church, encourage people to be filled with the Spirit. He will tear down the walls that divide us!

ADDRESS RACISM FROM THE PULPIT.

Jesus boldly confronted racism, especially the Pharisees' snobbish attitude toward Samaritans. Jewish leaders hated Jesus because He showed compassion to everyone, regardless of ethnicity.

The apostle Paul's decision to take the gospel to Gentiles offended Jewish people who didn't believe God cared about anyone but them. The gospel is not the gospel if it doesn't call people to repent of racial pride!

LEAD THE WAY IN APOLOGIZING FOR PAST INJUSTICE.

In my city of LaGrange, Georgia, a black man named Austin Callaway was cruelly lynched by a white mob in 1940—and the murder was covered up. But 77 years later, our chief of police, who is white, organized a public apology service at a local church.

Pastors, community leaders and descendants of Callaway joined hearts to heal an old wound. If your community has been divided by racial injustice, public repentance can bring transformation.

MODEL DIVERSITY FROM THE CHURCH PLATFORM.

I've talked to many white pastors who say they want racial diversity in their churches. Yet when I look at their stages, I only see white. If people

only see one color up front, they will assume you don't give everyone an opportunity to serve.

At the church I attend, New Community Church in LaGrange, our pastor is black; one associate pastor is a white man and another associate is a white woman. The music team rotates each week and is a perfect blend of white and black; even the greeter team at the front door of the church is mixed. It's no surprise that our congregation is about 70 percent black and 30 percent white.

"Let's stop pretending that racism doesn't exist inside the church. Let's own it, confront it and renounce it."



TRAIN LEADERS FROM ALL RACIAL GROUPS.

For years, I've met African-Americans who attended churches led by white pastors; yet it's rare to find white congregants in churches led by black pastors. Why is that?

Many white Christians hold an unspoken belief that they could never submit to a black leader. That's silly, especially when you consider that black leaders helped lead the early church. In Antioch, for example, Paul served alongside two black men, "Simeon who was called Niger" and "Lucius of Cyrene" (Acts 13:1). Simeon's nickname literally means "the black guy"!

And let's never forget that the father of the Pentecostal movement in the United States was a black man named William Seymour. At Seymour's Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, he preached that Jesus "washed away the color line." Do we still believe that?

GIVE IMMIGRANT GROUPS A PLACE TO MEET.

Have you studied the racial demographics of your city? You may be surprised to learn there are immigrants from many parts of the world in your backyard. Perhaps you could invite a Hispanic, Congolese or Pakistani congregation to meet in your church building on Sunday afternoons.

Many Christians are actually afraid of foreigners, and our current political climate fuels xenophobia. We must come alongside immigrant pastors and help them reach their own. Provide translation and headsets for visitors who don't speak English. Better yet, invite a local Hispanic pastor to speak to your congregation.

IDENTIFY YOUR "SAMARIA."

Jesus told His disciples to take the gospel to 1) Jerusalem, 2) Judea, 3) Samaria and 4) the ends of the earth (see Acts 1:8). Many churches sponsor overseas mission trips, but how many of us are reaching our "Samaritans"?

Your Samaria is the part of your local area where "those people" live. Samaria is what people refer to as "the other side of the tracks." It's the part of town you might avoid. Yet Jesus calls us to go there.

Why is it that we will fly to another country to share the gospel, yet we rarely venture near the government housing projects, slums or trailer parks that are only a few miles from our house? Our lack of involvement in those areas reveals our hearts.

Let's stop pretending that racism doesn't exist inside the church. Let's own it, confront it and renounce it so we can finish the job of sharing the love of Jesus with everybody. ☐