

Why Should I Care about Racial Reconciliation?

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Why Should I Care?

By Charles Ware

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Faith Church

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Our theme this year as a church is “Loving Our Neighbors” and we're very excited about where that path is taking us and we decided right here at the beginning of the year, the first couple of months that we would just address head on the question: well, why should I care? Because let's face it, one of the things that hinders many of us from loving our neighbors well is just the matter of apathy and indifference. So, we're considering different categories of persons and different kinds of situations and then just taking the question: why should I care about that?

One of those categories that we decided we needed to talk about this year was the matter of: why should I care about racial reconciliation? As soon as we began talking about that, the person on the planet that I wanted the most to talk to our church family about this is our speaker this morning, Dr. Charles Ware. Dr. Ware is the President of Cross Roads Bible College in Indianapolis. He and his wife, Sharon, have served their faithfully for 22 years. He's a dear friend of this church and has ministered to us and for us in a number of ways and, Dr. Ware, we're so thankful that you're willing to give us time this morning to talk to us about this important subject.

Dr. Ware: Amen, thank you, Pastor Steve. It's always a joy to be at Faith. I appreciate your stand on the word of God and I'm excited about some of the things that I see developing as God continues to grow this ministry. Delighted to be here. Sharon is not with me this morning but we celebrated our 40th anniversary this past year so we praise God for that. Amen.

Somebody asked me at the last service about our son, Matt, who in 1998 ran into a wall and broke his neck and became a quadriplegic. July 6th I had the privilege of performing a wedding for he and his new wife and they have built a home about five minutes away from us so God is good. Our family overall is doing good. We're delighted to see God's working in their lives.

I also want to mention to you that Cross Roads Bible College we have a table set up and you can get some information. We have online courses now. In fact, we have two online majors: one of them is Biblical Counseling and the other one is Urban Leadership and the subject you're talking about this morning. You get a lot of urban leadership from that as

well as one particular course that I have created called “Culture, Race and the Church.” That’s a course you can take online also. So, I want to at least mention those resources to you and hopefully you’ll get part of them. We are really excited. I guess the next service I go it will be over with and Andre Ballard, one of our CBC grads and I’m so glad that he’s connected here at Faith and part of your team. I’m delighted about that.

I do have to do a little housekeeping before I get into this subject. Sometimes I speak on this subject and people come up with questions afterwards. I’m leaving afterwards because I’m going over to the other place so you can’t ask me but you might want to ask Pastor Viars. So, I’m going to try to answer some of them. Some people say, “Why are you talking about race? There’s only one race, the human race.” Well, I coauthored a book with Ken Ham and we said there was only one race, the human race but since you asked me to speak on racial reconciliation, I’m just doing what you asked me to do, okay? But we do know that culturally our country is divided along some of these cultural lines however you want to define it.

Another deal on housekeeping, let’s get this out of the way. People want to know, well, they don’t want to know but I have people tell me this: “You’re not African American. You’re just American.” Well, that’s fine. I’m not arguing with you but I’m black so I get that in my favor. So, we still can talk about this subject a little bit. Then people want to know, “Why do we need a black history month? We don’t have a white history month.” That’s because you get the other 11 but just studying history a little bit, you kind of get into some of these things that come up and society is trying to deal with them.

Finally, my little housekeeping, “Are you one of those angry black men trying to stir up trouble? Every February somebody drags somebody in here trying to push racial stuff down our throat?” Well, I’m not angry, folks, I’m in love with Jesus and I don’t hate white folks. My wife is white, blessed God. Amen. So, I’ve crossed a great divide. Woo, glory be to God!

Why should I care about racial reconciliation? You know, you talked about care for the elderly and Steve told me and I said you should have one about the unborn and he said, “Well, we didn’t get that because the weather shut the church down.” My proposition to you this morning is that I should care about racial reconciliation because every human being has been created in the image of God and needs redemption through Christ. Furthermore, believers have been united in Christ, made interdependent through Christ and are identified as the disciples of Christ through the transcendent love of Christ. Those of us who are born again, that should capture us right there but I’m going to go through a few things real quickly here about why we don’t care about racial reconciliation. These are some of the things that I heard, you might have some to add to it so you can make up your own list.

1. People tell me, “We have enough problems in the church already? I mean, we have adultery in the church. We have fornication in the church. We have broken families in the church. We have jealousy in the church. We have pride in the church. We have all those problems. Why do you want to bring another race in here? We’ve got enough problems.”

And then some people have the fear of the unknown. They're like, "Well, will they like us? Will they accept us? What if I offend them?" I've had people say, "I don't know what to call you. Can I call you black? African American? Afro-American? What are you?" Call me Christian for you that are here.

But there is fear. People have these fears in their heart and then there is the fear of failure. "Are we trying to meet some kind of quota? Should not they reach their own? Why waste money and time on something that's destined to fail. We've done studies and we know that homogenous churches, when you bring people that look like you, think like you, in your own economic bracket, they grow faster. Don't make us fail." So people don't want to get involved in that.

Then there is the fear of change. "What kind of music will they be playing? Change our music, by God." And what about interracial marriage. "Oh my goodness, you know what I mean. The people come together and sit around and they might like one another, they might get married. God forbid that that happens." I'm already over that boat.

Then there is the fear of confrontation about the past. "I mean, I'm so tired of that. I never owned a slave and I wasn't part of a segregated society and discrimination and all that stuff. We've got a black man in the White House. We out to get past this stuff." Yup, I understand. We don't want to deal with that and the fear of confrontation.

Then there is the fear of social decline in our church. "Education, I paid all kinds of money to get my kid into a Christian school so that they could read and write and go out and get a job and then you're going to bring people in here that can't even read and write and they're going to be with my kid. What about economics? They haven't got any money and the immorality. They look at movies and listen to music that I would not allow my kids to listen to and you bring them into church."

Then there is the fear that this multicultural diversity tolerant rhetoric will slowly lead us from a biblical foundation to subjective feelings and therapeutic prescriptions that will squeeze us into a moral abyss. I like that one; I came up with that one myself. I could preach on that one all day long.

Let's get down to why we should care, though. Well, our entertainment world cares, the athletic world cares, our major education institutions care, our major businesses care, our political world cares. Some of you might say, "Well, all those things you just listed and their cares is exactly why I don't care because they've got this immoral, lack of biblical foundation view of tolerance that's killing us." Well, as Christians I think this one ought to capture us: our God cares. We should care because God cares. I want to start off just with the heart of God and the book of Jonah and chapter 4 and verse 9.

In the book of Jonah, you've got a reluctant prophet that didn't want to obey God, he didn't want to go to Nineveh, he didn't want to preach but God captured him and told him to go to Nineveh. He jumped on a boat going the opposite direction and then God gave him private transportation after he got him kicked off the boat and gave him some private

transportation. Hey man, I mean, he was living cool. Don't get upset about that. I mean, the man had a good life going for him there.

So, God gave him private transportation, shot him up over there and then God calls upon him to preach and he goes and he preaches and a whole city repents. Now, how do you like that? I'm preaching a gospel to this city and they repent and get saved and here's the prophet, instead of rejoicing, he's mad. In fact, he's sitting there, "God, now that's why I didn't want to go to begin with. You see, I knew it was like you. You do some stunt by being gracious and forgiving and I don't want them forgiven. We've been at war with them. They beat us. They humiliated us. I hate these Ninevites!"

I have a friend who is writing a book, kind of a unique book. He said, "We're doing all this stuff about questions of people, how do you feel? What do you think?" He's writing a book about all the questions in the Bible that God asked of human beings. Different twist. Here is one of them: God takes Jonah and God causes a plant to grow up and covers his head from the sun. He's liking that, personal comfort, the thing is beautiful. Then God smites the plant and it goes and his old bald head gets hot. He gets mad and then the Bible says in Jonah 4:9, "And God said to Jonah, Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "It is right for me to be angry even to death." Verse 10, "But the Lord said, You have had a pity on the plant for which you have not labored nor made it grow, which came up in the night and perished in the night and should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than 120 thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left and much livestock?"

Now, God leaves it at that penetrating question. God is saying to Jonah, "You're concerned about your personal comfort and you're concerned about blessings that I sovereignly brought over your life and took from your life and you feel as though you have a right to it and you're angry about it. Now Jonah, I want you to get one thing straight: do I have not a right to be concerned about human beings that I have brought to myself?" Ladies and gentlemen, I want to tell you the first and most compelling reason we should care about reconciliation, it's because every human being has been created in the image of God and has infinite worth because they have been created in the image of God. Period. It doesn't matter about their education, their ethnicity, their economic background. What matters is that the God of creation in Genesis 1:27, he began this whole thing, he keeps it going and Genesis 9:6 we're told that capital punishment is based upon the fact that the individual you killed was created in the image of God.

We are image bearers. It doesn't matter our color. It doesn't our economic background, our educational background. Psalm 139, he knew us in our mother's womb. We were woven in the inward part. In Jeremiah 1:5, he tells Jeremiah that he called him in his mother's womb. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Beloved, life rather than abortion, we stand for that. Why? Because God has created every human being in his image.

It doesn't matter their language, their nationality, their economics. It matters. I've had some friends sometime tell me about voting politically and I tell them, "I'm not going to vote for some dude that I know supports abortion." They're like, "Well, you can't make that just the one single issue. I mean, there are other issues: there are justice issues, education issues, economic issues and all these social issues." I said, "I know, but if you're dead they don't matter." So at least fight to get them here alive and then we can fight to get them justice and fight to get them all those other things.

Listen, God loves life. It's of infinite value to him and we need to keep that in mind. We want justice for the poor and those that are vulnerable in our society because they were created in the image of God. We want empowerment rather than entitlement because people were created in the image of God. This all leads to the greatest concern and that is salvation. Salvation. Listen beloved, you and I, we think we're so different but we're not that different. I mean, look, I was on a radio show once in Virginia and a guy called up. He was a white Aryan the host told me later. He said, "He calls in from time to time. He's white Aryan." He calls in and he wouldn't talk to me, he talked to the host of the show. He said, "We know where white people came from. White people came from Adam. We don't even know where black people came from. So, what does your guest have to say about that?" I said, "Well, the only thing I've got to say about that is that the Bible is explicitly clear in Romans 5:12, 'Wherefore it is by one man sin entered the world and death passed upon all men and all have sinned.' If only white people came from Adam, then only white people are sinners, I guess."

The reality is: we all came from Adam and that makes us all related in that we're all sinners. I tell people there is enough sin to go around for everybody, thank you. We all have broken the law of God and it's the love of God expressed in sending his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." Jesus Christ hung on that cross. He died. He was buried. He rose again. Why? That we might be saved and those of us who repent of our sins and come to Christ, we are one in the body of Christ. We are family. That's why we should care.

You and I should be busy out there trying to discern how might we witness to individuals and bring them to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ because they matter to God. In 1 Corinthians 9, an interesting text here in this whole concept of salvation and different cultural groups. I'm always intrigued by what the Apostle Paul had to say in this particular text and I want to just jump down right quickly to verse 19 because he's in a context that he's talking about his rights. His rights, he has the right to be apathetic. He's free from all people. He has a right for this and a right for that but he hasn't used all these rights in order that he might preach the gospel at no cost. But in verse 19, he says, "For though I am free from all men, I have myself a servant to all." A servant to all. He says, "that I might win them over. To the Jews I became as a Jew that I might win Jews. To those who are under the law as under the law that I might win those who are under the law. To those who are without law as without law, not being without law towards God but under the law towards Christ that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became as weak that I might win the weak. I've become all things to all men that I might by all means save some."

Now, what you've got in this verse as you unpack it is, this man understood cultures different from his own. His cultural was one of Jewish background so he became as a Jew. "Well, alright, Paul, I understand that. You're a Jew." But no, no, no, those that were not under the law, he became as one not under the law, not without law to Christ. To the weak he became as a weak one. In other words, basically what this says to us: why should I care? Because I need to become all things to all men in order that I might save some. Salvation. Listen to this folks: no contact, no impact. If you don't go amongst the people group to live and witness amongst them, you have absolutely no impact.

The Apostle Paul was willing to learn different cultures, learn their sensitivities, so that he could give a clear presentation of the gospel and what I love about it, he said, "In order that I might win some." That is an important word because some of us don't want to get involved in racial reconciliation because you can't win all. "I can't will them all. I can't win them all." Listen, you aren't going to win them all. Not all black people are going to get saved. All white people are not going to get saved. All red people aren't going to get saved. All yellow people aren't going to get saved. But God is calling some from every people group and you and I need to be a reflection of that and we need to be passionate about the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can't afford to sit around and allow people around us to go to hell. It might be easier for us, we might not have as much stress and all the rest but the value of a soul should motivate us because God cares.

So, the infinite value that God places upon a life created in his image should cause us to care especially as Christians. Then, the second reason we should care is because of the interdependence God created within the church. God has not called us to be Lone Rangers, independent servants, but he called us to be interdependent. In Romans 12, he beseeches us "to present our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God which our reasonable service and not to be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we might prove what is that good and perfect will of God." Then he goes down into the gifts. The gifts are different but we are one.

Listen, this church has a great vision. God has opened a great door. As you move on the city of Lafayette and set up a community center there and seek to transform that, do you know that urban needs, no one person can meet them? You need the body of Christ to step up. We need Christians that have been saved by the Spirit in God, indwelt by the Spirit of God, gifted by the Spirit of God, willing to invest themselves according to the word of God, to advance the kingdom of God, for the glory of God. God has made us interdependent.

Some of the knowledge that you're going to need from people: I had one suburban church one time, they were going into the inner city and they wanted to do a ministry there. I was preaching in that church, kind of encouraging them and I made the statement that, "You need a partnership. You need a partnership with the people. You don't go in there like, Hey, here comes the great white hope. All you poor people, we're here to help you!" No, no, no, it's a partnership. I said, "Now, I know some of you are sitting out there and saying, What do you mean partnership? Man, I own my own business. I've got a multi-

million dollar business. I drive a Mercedes. My house is worth \$200-300,000 and I'm going down with some of these people in the city who can't balance a book and they are living on government subsidies. You aren't serious about a partnership are you?" I said, "I sure am." Because, you see, I've lived long enough to figure out that people with businesses, they hire consultants. Do you know what they get from a consultant? Knowledge. Consultants tell them how to make their business grow so that they can keep making money. They pay good money for consultants, y'all. That's what I want to be when I grow up and get out of the ministry. Go in one time and tell people what to do and say, "I'll check on you in four months. Just send me that money."

I said, "Now, here's the deal: you can drive a Mercedes into the city but if you make the relationship with the right people in the city, they can tell you how to drive it out, thank God." That's called a consultant. So, what you've got is a partnership. Your partner may not be bringing the money but your partner is bringing the know-how and the knowledge you need to be more effective for the glory of God. Amen? God has made us interdependent. In 1 Corinthians 12-13, he talks about the gifts in the body and how even the gifts that we think are lowly and not that important, but they have a part in the body and when one part of the body hurts, the whole body hurts and we need to be concerned about one another because we are interdependent by divine design. God has made his church that way.

This helps us in our sanctification process. Some of us will learn things about problems that people go through that we never knew was that way because we haven't experienced them ourselves. So, when we're sitting down and eating with a person or we're sitting down talking with a person, when we're sitting down trying to minister with a person and they begin to tell about their struggles and their life and we hear and we're broken because, thank God, we might not have gone through that but God's grace has rescued them. He's saved them, transforming them and now they have a gift to give to us, not only of what they can do to serve but just rubbing shoulders with them when it comes to the matter of our own sanctification, conforming us to the image of Christ. That is so powerful, that sanctification process.

Matthew 5:13-16, especially the end, talks about we're salt and light. We're salt and light. Beloved, God wants to put us on display. As we serve him together, as believers come together across ethnic backgrounds, across economic backgrounds, across educational backgrounds, the power of the cross has saved us and brought us into community and as we tackled community problems by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, then see men and women and boys and girls delivered from whatever has entrapped them and set free by the power of God and we come together and we're sanctified together and we serve together, we stand in a community as salt and light.

Let me ask you the question: what are we going to do? Are we going to just curse the darkness? Or are we going to put some light in there? I hear so many Christians, "Oh, things are so bad. The country has gone this way. The country has gone that way. Oh, oh, oh, it's horrible!" Get a grip on yourself. You're not the first people who lived in a country that didn't like God. Where are the Daniels? Where are the Esthers? Where are

the Josephs? Where are those men and women of God in a country that is against him? Become salt and light. They stop the decay. They bring light and hope to a dying and decaying nation. We are that, beloved, and people need to see it. It doesn't matter whether you're black, white, red or yellow, it just matters whether you've been washed in the blood. I have a sermon called "Color me Love." What color are you? Color me love.

Beloved, this is so powerful what God is doing here at Faith. You just believe God, stick with him and work together. Listen: we need to care because of the infinite value that God has created upon life. We need to care because of the interdependency God has created within the church. We'll never get the work of God done, we will never advance the church the way God wants it advanced unless we learn to work together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ by the word of God.

Thirdly, we should care because of the identification of the body of Christ. The identification of the body of Christ. The first book I wrote was "Prejudice and the People of God: How Revelation and Redemption Leads to Reconciliation." I wrote this book kind of through the life experience of a young black man that was a couple of grades behind me in school. I took him to a camp. He made a profession of faith in Christ and then he was talking about coming to Bible college with me and so on and so forth. But one of those camp experiences we went to, he went in and he was a great athlete, an unusual athlete. He was 5' 10 1/2" and he could dunk the ball with two hands; he could shoot equally with equal accuracy from 30' out with his right or left hand. Just phenomenal. We went to this camp and all the girls were gathering around him and all this so the Youth Director pulled him aside and said, "You shouldn't be sitting next to these white girls." So, he came to me and he wanted to know what this was all about. I said, "I have no idea, man, but we didn't come here for girls. We came here for Jesus so just forget about it and let's keep on trucking."

Well, I did my little thing and I went off to Bible college and then he was talking about coming and that summer some black power advocates got a hold of him. They began to talk about Christianity being the white man's religion and all that. He related back to this situation so he told me he was not coming to Bible college, he's going to secular college and he's going to play professional sports. He was college one month and broke his foot. Dropped out of college. Went to the city. Got involved with drugs. Got involved with some lady, beat her up and wound up in prison.

A friend of mine wrote me a note when I was in Bible college and said, "Man, I don't know what you heard about Len," he said, "but, man, he's in jail. You need to go talk to him. He'll listen to you." Well, I was 3 1/2 hours away. I didn't have a car and I just thought I'd write him a letter. I wrote him a letter. I don't know if he ever got it but a few weeks after that, my friend called me again and said, "Did you hear what happened to Leonard?" I said, "No, I don't know what happened to Leonard." He said, "Man, he got released from prison, 13 days, got released from prison, got hooked up with a woman, they got in an argument, had a gun, it went off, shot and killed him." I had a lot of regrets. Should I have gone and visited him, all those types of things.

One thing it did make me do because at that particular time, I was thinking, "I don't care. Whatever the Bible says, I'm cool with it. If the Bible don't want interracial marriage, I don't want interracial marriage. If the Bible says you should have a black church, white church, polka dot church, I'm good with it. Whatever God says, I'm good." I began to study the Bible and I came to this strange conclusion: that God said the church is one and I said, "Oh, my goodness. Hello." So, I wrote this book "Prejudice and the People of God," got as many Scriptures as I could in it to show the heart of God in honor of my friend, Len, who was killed.

What difference may it have made if he wasn't confronted in that way, if he was embraced in love? I really don't know but I do know this: that the watching world should be able to discern that we are Christians by our love one for another. I understand you have to go through things, beloved. Listen, when I got saved, I was the first black person to join my church. In fact, my Momma said, "You look like a fly in a bowl of milk." I told her, "Ahhhh, no, no, no, Momma." I said, "I'm a drop of chocolate in a bowl of milk. I'm going to sweeten them up."

But they had the Bible there and it had good teaching there and that's where I wanted to be because I got saved. I wasn't looking at their color. The book of Ephesians is a great book to read on the body of Christ. That whole book is written about Jew and Gentile being bought together as one and I tell people, "The idea of one body is not some fad in our society talking about multi-culturalism and tolerance but this happens to be the word of God and it speaks of the church of God that he's created for the glory of God."

I want you to look here in Ephesians 2 and I just want to pull just a few things out of here. I've got a lot more in this book. You get a hold of that book and read that because I tried to put as many Scriptures as I could. I told somebody I was writing to a bunch of fundamental Christians that weren't going to listen to a word I said unless it was from the Bible so I put it in there.

God is talking about this Jew and this Gentile and the Gentiles were far away, they were separated from the promises of God and the covenants of God and all that. But then in verse 13, he said, "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He," that is, Christ, "Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments contained in the ordinances so as to create in himself one new man from two, thus making peace."

Hey, one thing I love about the cross of Jesus Christ: it's made peace, beloved. I tell people, "I'm not trying to create peace between black, white, latinos, immigrants, all that stuff. No, no, no, but when we're saved, Christ has created the peace." We need to maintain the peace. We need to get our flesh out, our arrogance and our pride and all of that and we just need to live out the word of God because he has made peace. It's the cross. It's the power of the cross.

Verse 16, “And that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” I love that. I love that, that we are one now because God has made us one and that's why we should care.

Verse 18, “For through him we both have access by one spirit to the Father.” That is so awesome. By the blood of Christ, the death, burial, resurrection of Christ. As a born again believer, I have access to Almighty God.

I try to tell some of my black friends, they talk about, “The man, the man. The man, the man, the white man.” Now, why are you enslaved by some invisible dude you're calling the man? When if you're saved, you have access to Almighty God? I'm so glad when I talk to him through Jesus, there is no angel up there saying, “I screen God's calls. Is he black or white? Let him through.” No, they look at the blood and see the blood and that gets me through. I want to be the man that God wants me to be so I use that access.

Verse 19, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens.” We belong to a country whose maker is God. We are fellow citizens of heaven. It says, “with the saints and members of the household of God.” We are family. Those of us who are born again, we are family.

The Bible says down here in verse 22, “In whom you also have been built up for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” When I look in another believer's eyes, I look at God because he dwells in him. That's awesome.

Now, the Bible also says in Ephesians 3:1, look at that one, but this is a mystery. That is, Jew and Gentile come together as one. That is a mystery and it manifests the manifold wisdom of God, that he is to Jew and Gentile and made us one.

I love John 13 where it says that “by this shall all men know that you are my disciples in that you have love one for another.” That's an awesome text.

Let me just close quickly here and run over to Revelation 5. This is kind of going towards the end of things as God is looking at the unveiling. The tribulation is going to come upon the world. 5:8 it says, “Now when he,” that is, Christ, “had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and 24 elders fell down before the Lamb each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints and they sung a new song saying, You are worthy to take the scroll and to open the seals for you were slain and has redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation and have made us kings and priests to our God.”

Listen beloved, he is worthy. If you have no other reason to care, Jesus Christ is worthy for us to be reconciled through the blood of Christ and declared to a dying world that we are the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lafayette should look at Faith and simply say, “They belong to the Lord Jesus Christ,” in part because of your love one for another. God bless you. Check out our table, get some things on our school and we'll see what God does.

Father, we thank you for the word of God. We thank you for the people of God. How I do pray that you might fill us with the Spirit of God and transform us by the love of God that we might create a community of God that says to a watching world we are your disciples because of our love one for another. In Christ's name. Amen.