

Vanguard Ministries

Statement on Racial Reconciliation

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? — Micah 6:8 (ESV)

Less than four generations separate us from the end of the Civil War. Deeply embedded in the fabric of the United States is the tyranny of racism that haunts us still today. Racism is an evil that lurks in our subconscious that, more often than we would admit or even notice, rises up to wreak havoc in our churches and our culture. Racism fully formed is hatred resulting in injustice by prejudging someone as inferior to one's self due to physical characteristics or nationality. Racism should not be tolerated, especially in the church.

There is one race, the human race, bearing the image of the Triune God (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-2; 9:6; James 3:9). Human beings share a common ancestry through the lineage of Adam (Rom 5:18-19), and by design of our Creator, and for His pleasure and glory, human beings are wonderfully diverse in skin pigmentation, eye color and shape, hair color, and a myriad of other unique characteristics. Every human being is unique by God's design (Eph 2:10). We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and fashioned in the womb by God Himself (Psalm 139).

Because we descend from a common ancestry, we share in the sin nature that creates our common need for a savior, found only through gracious faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord (Rom 5:18-19; Eph 2:8-9). Unlike God who sees inwardly, humans see outwardly (1Sam 16:7). The result is that humans see complexion and not character. In Christ, we are given spiritual eyes that no longer see differences as means of division that separates, but diversity to celebrate (2Co 5:16-17). Physical characteristics no longer matter in the conduct of the Kingdom. Every believer is an ambassador of reconciliation, a joint heir with Christ, and able to minister within the context of their community, calling and anointing (2Cor 5:18-21).

We continue to affirm one of our core values, "Beauty in Diversity":

We value relating to each other as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-gifted blend of leaders and churches whose focus is not on social, economic, racial, or gender distinctions, but on our unity and identity in Christ. We will unashamedly and intentionally promote the development of multi-ethnic leadership teams and ministries as an expression of the heart of the Father for authentic reconciliation ministry.

We do not take lightly the nature and nurture that for so many of us have shaped our worldview, thus reinforcing racial stereotypes. Often these racial prejudices are deeply rooted so as to make us blind to our sinful ignorance. Like the Apostle Peter, many of us require repeated prompting by God to get the message of reconciliation (Acts 10:9-20).

Only the Spirit of God and the blood of Christ can assist us as we have deep repentant dialogue with our brothers and sisters to start tearing down the dividing walls we have knowingly or unknowingly built in our lives (Eph 2:11-18). The hatred and injustice that was evident in the recent George Floyd murder has resulted in a fresh awareness of racism in America. We believe that racism, bigotry, prejudice exists; it's real and it's wrong. They are a result of the sinful human condition.

We affirm that the church of Jesus Christ should take the lead in bringing greater understanding through listening, learning, and changing. As leaders we acknowledge that we must take the initiative to remove any racial and cultural barriers and foster unity across racial and cultural lines. We urge all Church leaders to recognize how the sharing of power and position can be a tangible measure of biblical inclusion. Passive indifference and the pursuit of personal peace and prosperity have held back the transforming power of Christ to end racial injustice. To keep silent in the face of existing racial injustice is a sin of the church, which for too long has been disengaged from the civic arena. While as Christians we acknowledge that each individual must have a change of heart that is an interior work of God's grace, we must work to ensure that our societal systems yield liberty and justice for all.