

**Mutual Responsibility**  
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**GFC – 4/18/21**

Sadly, we are in a time of great division and polarization in our country. There is political division and racial division. And it seems like everything the world tries fails to help.

Dr. Yancey talked about that last week in his message entitled Can Christianity Teach us Anything Unique About Racism. Dr. Yancey discussed the major ways the world tries to deal with racism. One worldview denies there's even a problem. Another view blames minorities. Another view blames whites. He showed us research that proves that none of these views work. None of them are adequate to heal racism.

And he showed us why from the Bible. They don't work because none of them deal with the heart. By nature, people are sinful and selfish at heart. If you change outward behavior without changing the heart, you will not have lasting change. True change involves repentance and a change of heart.

Since the world tends to always blames someone else, few people take personal responsibility. Dr. Yancey showed us that if racism is going to be healed, there must mutual responsibility. It's not just a black solution, a white solution or a Hispanic solution or an Asian solution - all of us must do our part.

For this to work requires mutual responsibility. By the way, that's the title of my message today.

Before I speak on that I just want to say that the fact that you belong to a multi-ethnic church says a lot about you. Obviously, you can't be a hardcore racist and stay here for long. The fact that you are here says that you are willing to worship with people who are different from you. The fact that you are here says that you love people of different ethnicities. The fact that you are here shows that you believe a multi-ethnic church can make a difference in our world. And as your pastor, I am very proud of you for that.

I know it might be easier to be part of a church that's all white or all black or all Hispanic or all Asian. That's why we're teaching on Forward in Diversity. We want to learn how to better communicate and relate to one another. This is one of the main things you asked for in the Faith and Race survey we did as a church last year. So, we are moving forward with that, as difficult as it might be.

Pastoring a church is hard – pastoring a multi-ethnic church is even harder! Relationships are hard – cross-cultural relationships are even harder! Why is that? Because it's easier for people from similar backgrounds and upbringings to relate to one another.

It takes more effort to really understand where people from a different background are coming from. But it's important because it affects their beliefs and the way they live and vote and build relationships. That's why most churches are segregated and why most people have more relationships with people who come from a background similar to theirs.

But here we are – a reflection of heaven – which is composed of people from all people groups, all tribes, all languages, all ethnicities. I thank God for that and I thank God for you!!!

And we have a vision to build on that. Not just to attend a church with different ethnicities, but actually building relationships with people of different ethnicities.

The Bible says a lot about our mutual responsibility for one another. In fact, we preached a whole series of messages not that long ago on all the one-another verses of the Bible.

The phrase “one-another” is found 100 times in the New Testament. When you look at these verses, a few common themes show up:  
 One-third of the one-another commands deal with unity in the church.  
 One third of them instruct Christians to love one another.  
 About 15% stress an attitude of humility among believers.

“One another” is two words in English, but it's only one word in Greek: ἀλλήλων (*ah-LAY-loan*). It's a reciprocal pronoun which means that it speaks of actions that are mutual, given by each toward the other.

Of course – there are times it seems one is doing all or most of the giving, but the goal is mutual giving and receiving. Remember what Romans 12:5 says:

*We are parts one of another (mutually dependent on one another).*

In other words, we have mutual responsibility for one another.

The Bible teaches that we have the mutual responsibility to:

- Love one another (mentioned 17 times)
- Greet one another (mentioned 4 times)
- Bear one another's burdens (mentioned 3 times)
- Forgive one another (mentioned 2 times)
- Comfort one another (2 times)
- Admonish one another (2 times)
- Submit to one another (2 times)
- Pray for one another
- Give preference to one another
- Edify one another
- Fellowship with one another

Assemble with one another  
 Accept one another  
 Serve one another  
 Consider one another

One of the most painful things for me as a pastor is when believers walk away from other believers and even the church because they get offended and they are not willing to communicate and work things out. They're not willing to do the one another. Listen – we live in a culture of offense where many people are constantly offended. If that's you, please read the Bait of Satan by John Bevere.

The Bible plainly teaches us what to do when offenses occur. And they will occur! This issue is so important that Jesus said in Matthew 5:23-24

*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*

Jesus is saying here that reconciliation is so important that if you are in the middle of worshipping God and remember you've hurt someone, go get it right – then continue worshipping. If you've wronged someone – it's your responsibility to initiate reconciliation.

Here's the hard part - if someone wrongs you – it's still your responsibility to go to them. Matthew 18:15 says:

*If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.*

God is showing us how important the ministry of reconciliation is. All of us hurt and get hurt – so we need to be experts in reconciliation, which means we must understand how to confess and how to forgive.

Whose responsibility is it to make sure you are right with other people? Yours. Biblically, you're never off the hook. The ball is always in your court. If you have wronged someone, it's your responsibility to work it out. If someone has wronged you, it's your responsibility to work it out.

Don't wait on someone else to initiate. Do all you can to work things out. Romans 12:18 says:

*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

Unfortunately – most of the time this is not happening. I've seen people get offended by something that someone posted on Facebook. They thought the post was either mean or hateful or even racist. So – they unfriend the person who posted. Sometimes they even leave the church.

And occasionally – they will talk to me about it. I always ask them, “Did you talk to the person who offended you.” And their answer is almost always, “No.” And so I point out to them the principles of Matthew 18 where if you have an issue with a person – you go to them and nobody else! If they won’t hear you – then try again with a couple of witnesses. If they still won’t hear you – then you come to the church about it.

But people almost always refuse to do that. And I ask them, “Why are you coming to me about someone you think is doing something unbiblical, but when I give you the biblical way of dealing with it, you refuse to do it?” Don’t expect biblical results if you refuse to handle things in a biblical way!

This is one of the reasons we are working on communication and understanding one another on Wednesday nights. We are learning how to have difficult conversations in a godly way.

Listen – the church is supposed to be the light of the world. We are called to be ministers of reconciliation, but how can we minister reconciliation to the world if we can’t even do it in the church?

Reconciliation means to restore to relationship after division happens.

What racism divides – reconciliation unites.

What hatred hurts – reconciliation heals.

What division destroys – reconciliation restores.

What racism tears down – reconciliation builds up.

2 Corinthians 5:16-20 says:

*So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us.*

These verses show us what it takes to be ministers of reconciliation.

Reconciliation means to restore to relationship after division has taken place.

There is obvious division in this country. For us to be reconcilers we must:

- 1- Not look at others from a worldly point of view
- 2- We must view others as Christ views them
- 3- We must be ambassadors who appeal to others on God’s behalf.

Jesus came to reconcile us to God and to each other. There was a barrier between us and God and He tore it down. We need to tell people about that. There was also a barrier between people groups and He tore it down. We need to tell people about that also.

Ephesians 2:13-19 tells us that at one time we were once far from God, but the blood of Jesus brought us near. But that's not all!

*For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.*

*His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility.*

*He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.*

As people groups, we can be divided by a wall of hostility – but Jesus has destroyed the barrier between us. He made peace out of hostility. How did He do it? Through the cross. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

In Christ there is no Jew nor Greek nor black nor white nor Latino nor Indian nor Asian. There is only the body of Christ. Galatians 3:26-28 says:

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

In Christ – your race or your occupation or your gender do not matter. We are all one in Christ. This is not to say we are color blind. We are all either black or white or whatever shade we are – we are either men or women. How many of us got to choose our race or our gender? None of us. We are all different and we honor that – we celebrate that. But what we do get to choose is Jesus. Romans 10:12-13 says:

*For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

And when we do that – we become one with each other. When churches reflect this truth – we are appearing on earth as we will appear in heaven.

The Great Commission commands us to make disciples of all nations. We find that in Matthew 28:19

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.*

The Greek word translated nations is ethnos. The word ethnic comes from this word ethnos, which means a race, a tribe, a people group.

Many times when we see the word nation we think of countries, but God thinks of people groups, races, ethnicities. So when Jesus says to make disciples of all nations, He means to make disciples of all ethnicities, all people groups. We all have the responsibility to do this! But how can we do it if we don't really understand different ethnic groups?

We send out missionaries to the nations of the world, but before they go they are trained. That training includes biblical training and language training, but a big part of their training is learning about the people group they are going to minister to. They need to know their worldview, beliefs, customs and traditions.

Knowing the Bible and the language is not enough. If they don't understand the culture of the people they are trying to reach for Christ, they will never make an impact. The same is true for us! We will never make an impact on our world unless we understand the people we are trying to reach! And we have a unique opportunity in a multi-ethnic church to meet people from different ethnicities and to learn from them.

This takes mutual responsibility. It also takes intentionality. If we are going to grow in unity, we must get intentional about it. We must be intentional about greeting people – especially new people and people of all races.

Then go beyond that and invite someone of another ethnicity out to eat or to get together at your house. When you get to know each other – you will see we are not as different as you might think.

Psalm 133 says that God commands His blessing where people dwell in unity. That's why the enemy is constantly trying to divide us. He wants to block that blessing.

Satan knows God's truth that a house divided cannot stand.

Satan knows that the place of unity is the place of blessing.

That's why he works to divide husbands and wives and families.

That's why he works to divide churches, nations and ethnic groups.

Our fight against racism and division is not a battle against people; it's a spiritual battle! Ephesians 6:12 says:

*For we do not wrestle with flesh and blood (physical opponents), but against the powers, against (the master spirits who are) the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.*

So we need to pray and do spiritual warfare by binding a spirit of division and loosing a spirit of reconciliation.

God created the church to do many things – like worship, make disciples. But listen to Ephesians 3:10-11

*His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The word manifold literally means that God's wisdom is "many colored." God wants to show His many-colored wisdom through the church - to whom? To those demonic rulers of this world. To the spirit of racism and division.

One of the ways God's many-colored wisdom is shown is when people from different racial backgrounds are united in Christ in the church.

As a church, we want to Touch Heaven and Change Earth. We believe the church can be a catalyst for change in this time of racial unrest.

And whenever and wherever different ethnic groups gather together and worship – that in itself is an act of spiritual warfare! Demons can't stand it when we worship – and they really can't stand it when blacks and whites and Hispanics and Asians worship together!

Why do you think it's so hard to build a multi-ethnic church? Because when we are a visible manifestation of God's manifold, multi-colored wisdom we are in the forefront in the war against racism. Satan fights that with all he's got! But we will overcome in Jesus name! We will overcome with the blood of Jesus, which is sufficient for every person of every race.

Jesus said in Mark 11:17

*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.*

Remember – nations is ethnos – ethnic groups. The church is for all ethnic groups – so we need to view each other as Christ does.

How does Christ view people?

He's more concerned about where they're going than where they came from.

He's more interested in the content of their character than the color of their skin.

There are no Second-Class citizens in God's Kingdom!

We are all brothers and sisters in Christ, washed in the same blood, filled with the same Spirit and the same power to overcome our enemy!

And we have the mutual responsibility to do that in Jesus name!!