

Racial Reconciliation:  
A History, A Biblical Perspective,  
and a Response



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## Bible Verses

- 2 Timothy 3:16 – “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,”
- Genesis 1:26-27 – “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”
- Galatians 3:28 – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
- Colossians 3:10 – “And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

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## Class Expectations

- It is our hope to equip, inform, and empower you with a biblical perspective on racial reconciliation.
- There is no way we will figure it out all today. But it's great you're here to engage in this conversation.
- We see this gathering as the first of many our Watermark family will have on this subject.
- We are not promoting a liberal or conservative stance. Our hope is to let the Bible guide us as we present history and encourage each other to take action.
- As the body in Christ, we must extend each other grace.
- These types of conversations can be complicated because of the sin in each of our hearts.

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## Definitions in Today's Conversation

Presented by: Oscar Castillo  
Borrowed Heavily from *Racial Equity Tools*  
By Numerous Authors

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## Race

- A social construct created to concentrate power to a particular people and legitimize dominance over another group of people. It's not an actual biological fact. Consider these thoughts:
  - Race is a modern idea: ancient societies did not divide people according to physical differences, but according to religion, status, class, even language.
  - Race has no genetic basis: not one characteristic, trait, or gene distinguishes all members of one so-called race from all members of another so called race.
  - Slavery predates race: throughout history, societies have enslaved others often as a result of conquest or war, but not because of physical characteristics or a belief in natural inferiority.

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## Racism

- Definition: individual, cultural, institutional and systemic ways by which differential consequences are created for different racial groups.
  - Individual racism refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways. Examples include telling a racist joke, believing in the inherent superiority of white people over other racial groups, or not hiring a person of color because "something doesn't feel right."
  - Cultural racism refers to representations, messages and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with a particular group of people (in our context: white history) are automatically "better" or more "normal" than those associated with other racially defined groups.
  - Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which policies and practices of organizations or parts of systems (schools, courts, transportation authorities, etc.) create different outcomes for different racial groups -

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## Ethnicity

- Ethnicity generally refers to classifications of humans that are based on shared country or region of origin, shared history and culture.
  - Examples of different ethnic groups are:
    - Cape Verdean, Haitian, African American (Black);
    - Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian);
    - Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American);
    - Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino);
    - Polish, Irish, and Swedish (White).
- Race is a category created by dominant cultures and imposed on groups not considered part of the dominant culture
- Ethnicity is an identity people claim for themselves, based on common language, culture and current, recent or historic places of origin.

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## Indigeneity

- Definition: a classification that generally refers to groups of people in a territory they once occupied or owned, and that has since been taken over through conquest, colonialism, and/or genocide.

Examples:

- Maori in territory now defined as New Zealand;
- Mexicans in territory now defined as Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, and Oklahoma;
- Native American tribes in territory now defined as the United States
- The United Nations defines it: *"formally placed under a state structure which incorporates national, social and cultural characteristics alien to their own."*

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## Table Discussion

Spend some time discussing what you've heard at your tables. (10 minutes)

Questions to consider:

- What definition of race did you have prior to hearing Oscar's talk? How does it differ from the explanation he laid out? What implications will this have in your interactions with others?
- What ethnicity would you identify with and describe yourself as?
- Have you ever considered your own race, ethnicity, or indigeneity? If yes, how did that shape your personality and experiences growing up? If you have never considered that before, why do you think that was something that you never gave thought to?

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## Historical and Systematic Racism

Presented by Nika Spaulding  
Borrowed Heavily from *Divided by Faith*  
By Michael O. Emerson & Christian Smith

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## History Lesson

The Early Provincial Period: 1700-1730

- “To live in Virginia without slaves is morally impossible.” –Clergyman
- Slave population rate grew at 3x the rate of general population. (20% of pop was black, today is 13%)
- Some began to Christianize slaves, but push back from churches came because slaves weren’t fully human and didn’t have souls.
- Churches taught that it was a biblical mandate to remain a slave even after conversion.

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## History Lesson

Ordained missionary Francis LeJau’s baptismal vows for slaves:

*You declare in the presence of God and before this congregation that you do not ask for the holy baptism out of any design to free yourself from the Duty and Obedience you owe to your Master while you live, but merely for the good of Your soul and to partake of the Graces and Blessings promised to the Members of the Church of Jesus Christ.*

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## History Lesson

The Great Awakening: 1720-1770

- Amazing time in spiritual fervor for our country.
- Preachers strongly encouraged evangelizing to slaves, but did not see anything wrong with slavery.

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## History Lesson

The New Nations: 1770-1830

- Revolutionary War changed the perspective for many on slavery (national anthem).
- In 1770 a Baptist preacher in Massachusetts claimed that in permitting slavery, "We, the patrons of liberty, have dishonored the Christian name, and degraded human nature nearly to a level with the beasts."
- Yet, it was really only in the North that this view was adopted. For fiscal reasons, the South did not budge on the issue of slavery.

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## History Lesson

The Nation Divides: 1830-1865

- National fervor about slavery grew. The North and South would have to square off on the issue of slavery in war.
- Many churches split over this issue.
- Yet, even as people called for an end to slavery, they did not believe blacks were equal to whites. Churches kept blacks and whites separate, and did not create opportunities for blacks to lead.

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## History Lesson

About Charles Finney:

*Finney considered slavery a sin, but asserted that there should be no "diversion of the public mind" from the task of converting people and inculcating their minds with "the gospel." In addition, he believed racial prejudice was not a sin and that advocating "amalgamation" contradicted the goal of "benevolence," diverted public attention from the very real sin of slave holding, led to attacks on free blacks, and disrupted the churches.*

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## History Lesson

The South began using the Bible systematically to defend slavery.

From *Christian History*, vol. 11, no 1. page 24

Why Christians Should Support Slavery:

- Slavery removes people from a culture that "worshipped the devil, practiced witchcraft and sorcery" and other evils
- Slavery brings heathens to a Christian land where they can hear the gospel.
- Slavery is God's means for protecting and providing for an inferior race.
- The Church should concentrate on spiritual matters, not political ones.
- Those who support abolition are in James H. Thornwell's words, "atheists, socialists, communists, and red republicans."

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## History Lesson

New Form, Similar Result: 1865-1917

- After the war, many blacks began winning political seats, started taking jobs from whites, and finding prosperity (many also died in the tragic transition).
- This was unacceptable for many whites, so they led to the Jim Crow laws.
- Separate but equal became the battle cry: "No Christian ought to allow his conscience to be disturbed by the thought that he violates the unity of the Church by insisting on an independent organization for the colored race. The distinctions are drawn by God himself."

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## History Lesson

Renewed Concern: 1917-1950

- The advancement of blacks left many folks very angry. A resurgence of the KKK and even angry northerners led to violence against blacks.
- Some blacks were lynched in their WWI uniforms upon their return from fighting for this country.
- Between 1917-1921 one black home in Chicago was bombed on average once every 20 days.
- Whites began speaking out against lynching, but still upheld Jim Crow laws. If we're separate, we'll be safer was the idea.

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## History Lesson

The Civil Rights Era: 1950-1960

- Many blacks began organizing protest against the injustices.
- They found support in liberal Christians, Catholics, Jews, and other blacks.
- Evangelicals widely thought only Christ's return will usher in a new day for blacks.
- Billy Graham said, "Only when Christ comes again will little white children of Alabama walk hand in hand with little black children."
- White flight to suburbs, black ghettos emerge, and we are left with segregated churches.

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## Systemic Racism

False belief that after the Civil Rights Movement that Racism today is dead. However, it merely shifted from overt, outward expressions of racism to systemic.

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## Systemic Racism

Today

Racism 1) is increasingly covert, 2) is embedded in normal operations of institutions, 3) avoids direct racial terminology, and 4) is invisible to most whites.

*Racism is not mere individual, overt prejudice or the free-floating irrational driver of race problems, but the collective misuse of power that results in diminished life opportunities for some racial groups. Racism is a changing ideology with the constant and rational purpose of perpetuating and justifying a social system that is racialized.*

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## Case Study

## Employment:

*Jason—white, 18 month jail sentence for drug possession*

*Josh—black, clean record*

**Identical resumes, who gets the job?**

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## Case Study

## Employment:

*One researcher sent men to apply for 350 entry-level jobs in Milwaukee, WI. One team was black, one was white. The teams had identical resumes except for the record on some from each group. **White men with a record were more likely to be offered a job than black men with a clean record.** (The Mark of a Criminal Record, Devah Pager, Northwestern University)*

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## Case Study

## Wealth:

*Suzy—white, college educated, middle-class*

*Sharon—black, college educated, middle-class*

**Economic downturn, what happens?**

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## Case Study

## Wealth:

Median net financial assets for college-educated whites is 20,000, for blacks it's just \$175. So, income and job security become the only safety net for blacks.

"It is true when white American gets a cold, black America gets pneumonia." (pg 13)

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## Case Study

## Healthcare:

*Bob—white, lawyer, 56 years old, coronary failure*

*Jamaal—black, mechanic, 56 years old, coronary failure*

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## Case Study

## Healthcare:

*Study that looked at all circulatory disease and chest pain patients admitted to hospitals in Massachusetts. Looking at age, race, and income whites were 89% more likely to be given coronary bypass surgery.*

*A nationwide study of Medicare patients revealed and even higher disparity. White Americans were 3x more likely as black Americans to receive the surgery.*

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## So What?

Today

Racism 1) is increasingly covert, 2) is embedded in normal operations of institutions, 3) avoids direct racial terminology, and 4) is **invisible to most whites**.

*Racism is not mere individual, overt prejudice or the free-floating irrational driver of race problems, but the collective misuse of power that results in diminished life opportunities for some racial groups. Racism is a changing ideology with the constant and rational purpose of perpetuating and justifying a social system that is racialized.*

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As followers of Jesus, we are  
ministers of reconciliation

By Oscar Castillo

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## 2 Corinthians 5:11-15

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. <sup>12</sup>We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. <sup>13</sup>For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; <sup>15</sup>and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

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## 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

<sup>16</sup>From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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## Table Discussion

Spend some time discussing what you've heard at your tables. (10 minutes)

Questions to consider:

- What parts of the history and statistics that Nika shared were new or surprising to you?
- How does better understanding that historical context help you to connect to stories and explanations of racism and prejudice today?
- What are some areas in your life that you've seen these prejudices play out?
- Did this talk make you aware of any areas in your own life or institutions that you're a part of that may have innate prejudices built in? What are some examples?

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## Panel

Jason McPhaul, Nika Spaulding, Oscar Castillo, Charran James  
Moderated by: Christy Chermak

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## Panel Key Take-Aways

We hope you walk away from this panel having heard a few clear things:

- Stories of racism still happen today. If you are part of majority culture (in the US historically, that's been white) and don't have experiences like this, know that your black, hispanic, and minority friends do.
- When moments like the ones we talked about today happen, you have the opportunity to step in the gap. This is a problem resolved through relationships. If there are reasons you wouldn't feel comfortable stepping into moments like the ones you heard about today, wrestle through them now and be equipped and empowered the next time you see something happen.
- Your words and actions matter on this issue. You're either letting culture pull you in it's direction or swimming upstream. The church has to look different!

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## What next?

Don't let the conversation end here. Take these next steps with us:

- This problem is solved in the context of relationships. Considering the real stories and practical application you have heard today, how can you make sure that you are intentionally building relationships that cross race-lines? Who can you pursue in:
  - Our Church
  - Your friend group
  - Your job
  - Your neighborhood
- As we discussed, racism isn't just a person to person issue, it plays out in systems as well. How are you, as the church called to bring justice to a broken system? Has God given you a platform in housing, education, hiring, the prison system, etc? How can you use that platform to change these broken systems?
- Continue learning with us. Check out the resource list for more!

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