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**RACE AND THE GOSPEL**

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## A HISTORY OF OPPRESSION

- ▶ Early 1700's- African-Americans were not evangelized because the church denied that they had a soul
- ▶ 1750's- As the African-American population grew to about 20% of the total population the church reversed their stance out of fear, concluding Christianity as the best means to maintain order.
- ▶ White Baptists in the South withdrew fellowship from their Northern counterparts on May 10, 1845, forming the Southern Baptist Convention in order to better defend the South's practice of, and dependency upon, black slavery

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## A HISTORY OF OPPRESSION

- ▶ Denominations continued to split over slavery through the Civil War until it was abolished in 1865
- ▶ Slavery clause in the 13th Amendment left the door open for a new form of legalized slavery called, Convict Leasing. 9 out of 10 were African American.
- ▶ Jim Crow and Segregation Laws were enforced until their abolishment in 1964.
- ▶ In 1968, 89% of Southern Baptist Churches prohibited African-American membership.
- ▶ A public apology by the SBC was not realized until 1995.

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## STATISTICS

- ▶ Today, professing believers in America are more segregated on racial issues than their non-christian peers.
- ▶ 91% of pastors say racial reconciliation is mandated by the gospel
- ▶ 95% of whites attend predominantly white churches
- ▶ 90% of African-Americans attend predominantly black churches
- ▶ But...70% of congregations say they like their church just the way it is.

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## EPHESIANS 2:11-14

- ▶ Paul first reminds the Ephesians of their alienation from Israel, Christ, and the promises of God's covenants
- ▶ Paul then explains that through Jesus' work on the cross, they have been brought "near" just like the Jews
- ▶ This is made possible through peace in the person of Jesus Christ who has broken down the dividing wall of hostility

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## ABOLISHING THE LAW IN ORDINANCES

- ▶ Jesus abolished the ceremonial law of sacrifices, cleanliness, and segregation
- ▶ These were the laws that governed social relationships. Circumcised and uncircumcised. Clean and unclean. Dietary regulations
- ▶ This was also the law that kept both Jew and Gentile from obtaining access to God

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## CREATING ONE NEW MAN

- ▶ Christ sees humanity for what it really is. All people as image-bearers of God, with eternal souls in need of salvation.
- ▶ The Fall created division. The Universe is fallen resulting in conflict with God and each other. Christ has become the single unified covering for both.
- ▶ Through Christ, now both Jew and Gentile can be reconciled to each other.

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## MANDATE FOR RECONCILIATION

- ▶ 1 John 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.
- ▶ John 17: 20-23 I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.
- ▶ Our unity is a proclamation of the Gospel!

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## THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

- ▶ We are more than fellow citizens, we are family
- ▶ The authority of Scripture is the foundation for Christ's new church
- ▶ Jesus Christ himself is the cornerstone, joining his people together
- ▶ The new worldwide temple is a beautifully diverse mosaic pieced together by the work of Holy Spirit

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# APPLICATION

- ▶ Why do we go to Africa, India, or China? We say because we are one in the body of Christ and we care about the persecution and social injustice that believers endure there. We are hypocrites if we are silent about our own social injustice.
- ▶ Jesus, sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, is praying for you and I and what does he pray? That his people would be ONE so that the WORLD would BELIEVE!
- ▶ We make it very hard for people to believe that the Gospel can transform every aspect of life when our congregations are so segregated. We can't expect to be united for an hour every Sunday when we spend the other 167 hours of the week doing the opposite.
- ▶ Be proactive about seeking unity and grafting together in one Spirit. You may not have anything in common, but if Jesus is the only answer why you would associate, that's a powerful testament to the Gospel.