



Pray about racism

To help us pray through the sin of racism that pervades our nation, we need to understand what is God's purpose regarding the different cultures, ethnic groups, tribes, and languages? When we have a perspective of God's purposes, we should also recognise Satan's opposition and stirring of racial tensions.

For many generations in South African laws were made based on language and race. These laws determined where people could live and what education, access to healthcare and marriage opportunities every person had. This led to tremendous economic and social imbalances that devastated most South African citizens. The government recognised that these imbalances from the past needed to be redressed. Through broad based black economic empowerment, affirmative procurement policies, affirmative action, subsidised municipal rates and taxes, correcting measures to the health and education system etc, they have been attempting to redress many of these imbalances. As in the past, these actions are based on racial classification. For many people these steps are perpetuating the cycle of racialism. We need a miracle to achieve reconciliation and the restoration of economic and social opportunities for every person in our nation. As believers in Christ's reconciling work on the cross we have the opportunity to be part of that miracle.

Humanity is created in God's Image

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over...all the earth..." God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. (Genesis 1:26,31)

Thank God for the manner in which the different languages, cultures, ethnic and tribal groups in the nation reflect the diverse nature of God's character. Pray for an understanding of how *very good* the diversities are with which God created humanity.

Jesus recognises the importance of racial harmony

My prayer is...for those who will believe in me ... that all of them may be one, Father just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me; that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the whole world know you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 18:20,21,22,23)

Pray that Christians would recognise that racial tolerance, reconciliation and unity are a witness to the power of Christ's love for society. Praise God that as we relate towards individuals of a different race through acts of kindness, forgiveness, friendship and generosity we reflect something of Christ's glory.

God has determined where we live

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him... (Acts 17:26,27)

Thank God for the manner in which many language, tribal and ethnic groups live side by side in this nation. Our cultural diversity is not an unfortunate circumstance of history, but part of God's overall design and plan of creation. Ask that South African's would not focus on our differences, but recognise that God's purpose is that, arising from our diverse racial backgrounds, we would seek to know Him better.

God has given to every believer an opportunity to experience His love

Lord, you have assigned to me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. (Psalm 16:5-6)

Pray that as Christians, we would understand that God has assigned to every person an opportunity to experience his grace. Pray that every believer, despite any past racial oppression or current negative effects of affirmative action, will be grateful for where and how God can help them through their personal trials and circumstances.

Heaven will reflect the racial and cultural diversity of our society

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the lamb. (Revelation 7:9)

Pray for a fresh perspective of God's special love and understanding for the cultural diversity of society. Imagine the rejoicing in heaven when we take active steps through our attitudes and lifestyles to create opportunities for racial harmony and reconciliation.

The purpose of the church is to reflect the wisdom of God

God's intent was that now, through the (United) church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 3:10)

Selwyn Hughes the author of *Every Day with Jesus* stated, "Disunity in the church is perhaps the most serious impediment to the gospel we can think of. The biggest problem in church life is the inability of believers to relate to one another in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It has always been so and will perhaps always be so." Pray that Church leaders would recognise the importance of racial reconciliation within Christ's family.

Satan recognises the power of unity amongst Christians and will seek to stir up racial tension

The beast was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. (Revelation 13:7)

Though God has allowed Satan limited authority and power, it does not mean he will succeed. The Devil's scheme is to divide Christians through wealth discrepancies, racial and language differences, misunderstanding, prejudice etc. 'Divide and destroy' is Satan's chief strategy. Is there loss of fellowship between you and another Christian or group of Christians? Put the matter right today.

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12:14,15)

Because of the segregated nature of our society, many Christians do not comprehend the pain and frustration of thousands of families across the country. Ask God for practical steps where you may be a blessing to others.

Jesus, through his death on the cross, has brought an end to racial hostilities

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility... (Ephesians 2:14)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

As Christians we need to recognise how Christ has reconciled us to God and to each other. Recall instances in your own life of frustrations arising from any form of racism. Declare the fact that, in those circumstances, Christ has destroyed the barrier to racial reconciliation through his death.

We can recognise Christ in each other

'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:40)

Thank God for the circumstances in our country where different racial groups live in close proximity. Pray for an opening of your own eyes that you may recognise Christ in your neighbours who are culturally different from you.

By blessing others we affirm God's love for society

Love must be sincere. ... Honour one another above yourselves. ... share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. (Romans 12:9,13,14)

Almost everyone in this country has experienced some form of what they perceive as racial injustice. Instead of complaining and thinking of revenge or retribution, ask for God's perspective. Pray prayers of blessing upon those who have offended you. Pray for God's presence in the lives of those who were your enemies or to whom you are indifferent. Pray these Scriptures: *"Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:44,45)

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:8,9)

A source of racism is the root of bitterness

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." (Hebrews 12:14-15)

The practice and consequences of racism has offended many and has defiled our society. Allow Holy Spirit to expose areas where you have been offended. Ask Jesus to remove any root of bitterness and anger, which affects your relationship with persons of another racial or cultural group.

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." (Ephesians 4:30,31)

List areas where you are aware that racism is practiced. Repent on behalf of the perpetrators who may be motivated by bitterness and revenge. On behalf of victims of racial discrimination, pray that they may experience Christ's love enabling them to offer forgiveness.

God gives us strength to deal with acts of injustice against us

You sympathised with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had a better and lasting possessions. (Hebrews 10:34)

Part of the ability to forgive, is the understanding of our better and lasting possessions that accumulate in heaven as a result of obeying Christ's commandment to love our neighbours through practical acts of love. Pray for a perspective of how you are obtaining the better and lasting possessions in heaven.

The forgiveness that breaks Satan's hold on our communities

When Stephen was stoned to death, his prayer "*Lord do not hold this sin against them*"? (Acts 7:60) echoed Christ's prayer on the cross. Power was released when Stephen emulated Jesus' prayer, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*" (Luke 23:34). Stephen effectively silenced Satan's accusation against his murderers. In a similar way Satan is silenced when we ask God to forgive and bless those who have offended us. Have you allowed God to give you a new heart attitude towards those who have caused you pain and offence in the past? Do you feel the Father's love and compassion for those who have offended you? Do you know Him well enough to pray prayers of forgiveness and absolution based on Stephen's prayer?

Jesus applauds us in heaven when we truly forgive one another

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ... Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." (Acts 7:55,60)

Visualise Jesus standing at the right hand of the God and applauding you as you follow Stephen's example of forgiveness when he was martyred. Ask for God's *agape* love to forgive from the bottom of your heart, anyone who has caused you anxiety and fear for your future or that of your children in this country.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14,15)

Ask that there will be a testimony of reconciliation across this nation.

No experience is beyond God's grace

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

The greater the sin and offence, the greater the grace of God to cause forgiveness. Thank God that South Africa is already a witness to other nations of the potential of Christian reconciliation.

But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:19-20)

God has a deep and tremendous compassion for each one of us. Irrespective of how we have been offended, His desire is that we experience a full healing of our body, mind and spirit. Pray the fulfilment of this promise for the people of South Africa, *"I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten"* (Joel 2:25)

Acts of restitution will help with the miracle of racial restitution

Do you know Jesus and the Holy Spirit well enough to sell your possessions and give to the poor, according to Acts 4:32-34?

Pray that across this nation Christians from all backgrounds would emulate Zacchaeus in prayer and life, *Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."* (Luke 19:8).