

# Real Root of Racism

## Introduction

Racism is defined as, *“a belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human racial groups determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to dominate others or that a particular racial group is inferior to the others.”*<sup>1</sup>

Racism is clearly wrong. Yet, at the same time it is common for people to divide others into “us” and “them.” We love our group, be it of ethnic, cultural, political or religious kind. This can easily lead to a feeling of superiority and a tendency to be sceptical of those who are outside it.<sup>2</sup> That is why people of all races are consciously or unconsciously prejudiced to a certain degree because they are all biased, making assumptions based on their observations.<sup>3</sup>

For example, some people from Caribbean backgrounds not only experience unjustified suspicion from ‘whites’ but also prejudice from south Asians - and even from Nigerians. In turn Nigerians can face prejudice from Jamaicans. Some have said that the attitudes of ‘white’ people do express a suspicion toward ‘people of colour’ and this may reflect biases in the culture at large. Unfortunately, this differential attitude is often not taken seriously by the ‘white’ majority - even those who profess colour-blindness.<sup>4</sup> Understandably, it is hard for people who have not experienced such prejudice to empathise with those who do. On the other hand, we need to be aware of what the Christian hip-hop artist Shai Linne said, *“One of the most hurtful things we can do is to make mourners justify their pain.”*<sup>5</sup> To encourage a better understanding, it is very important for white people, to study the often-painful history of black and coloured people. Good books to begin with are:

- “We Need To Talk About Race: Understanding the Black Experience in White Majority Churches” by Ben Lindsay
- “Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race: The Sunday Times Bestseller” by Reni Eddo-Lodge

The above described universal “us - and - them” thinking, practised over many years, is really the heart of what eventually lead to the horrific killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, on 25 May 2020.<sup>6</sup> However, some argue that according to official statistics it cannot be attributed to systemic racism by the police. A report says: *“The police fatally shot nine unarmed blacks and 19 unarmed whites in 2019 . . . In 2018 there were 7,407 black homicide victims. Assuming a comparable number of victims last year, those nine unarmed black victims of police shootings represent 0.1% of all African-Americans killed in 2019. By contrast, a police officer is 18½ times more likely to be killed by a black male than an unarmed black male is to be killed by a police officer.”*<sup>7</sup>

Possible causes for the disproportionate aggression of and within the black minority are: first, the “us - and - them” thinking, sometimes escalating into racism. Secondly, the disadvantages resulting from that, such as unemployment and poverty<sup>8</sup>. Thirdly, what has been termed a “post traumatic slave syndrome.”<sup>9</sup> Attitudes leading to a show of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/racism> (All links were correct when accessed on 9 June 2020)

<sup>2</sup> <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/336/6083/825>

<sup>3</sup> <https://celesteheadlee.com/racism-vs-discrimination-why-the-distinction-matters/>

<sup>4</sup> These observations are made by a white Christian who is a member of a small, black majority church in the UK. A lot of his colleagues at work are from the same backgrounds. A pastor describes his own experience here:

<https://www.westminsterchapel.org.uk/the-day-i-realised-i-was-racist/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/george-floyd-and-me/?amp%20twitter%20impression=true>

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Floyd](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Floyd) He was "no saint" but still a saint! Here, 1 Corinthians 1:2, and here is why: [https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/may/george-floyd-ministry-houston-third-ward-church.html?fbclid=IwAR3Gwt4\\_dfGqAQdfaNA4tNct-5Vc5G1gzQa1CAwdW29w3GAwEDgwMQckR3o](https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/may/george-floyd-ministry-houston-third-ward-church.html?fbclid=IwAR3Gwt4_dfGqAQdfaNA4tNct-5Vc5G1gzQa1CAwdW29w3GAwEDgwMQckR3o)

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.dailywire.com/news/mac-donald-statistics-do-not-support-the-claim-of-systemic-police-racism?fbclid=IwAR1LJB5mSaj7zxADrQBdnExLMledRIN\\_UMAZ\\_xmLEyTvvuB6tVjvKWF8ls\\_2](https://www.dailywire.com/news/mac-donald-statistics-do-not-support-the-claim-of-systemic-police-racism?fbclid=IwAR1LJB5mSaj7zxADrQBdnExLMledRIN_UMAZ_xmLEyTvvuB6tVjvKWF8ls_2)  
<https://twitter.com/prageru/status/1267953194430115842>

<sup>8</sup> America freed the slaves but, unlike the white immigrants from Europe, gave them no land, or nothing in reality to get started on. “It's a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his bootstraps.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCRAWfczUtl>

<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post\\_Traumatic\\_Slave\\_Syndrome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Traumatic_Slave_Syndrome) It is sometimes built on wrong information (e.g. Three-fifths clause in constitution was not racist. It was to determine number of representatives for each state in the House (and direct

solidarity, tolerance, understanding and liking are not enough to combat this evil. Martin Luther King<sup>10</sup> was right to say that love alone can overcome it:

*“In speaking of love we are not referring to some sentimental emotion. It would be nonsense to urge men to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense[...] When we speak of loving those who oppose us we speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word Agape. Agape means nothing sentimental or affectionate; it means understanding, redeeming goodwill for all [sic] men, an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return.”<sup>11</sup>*

Lack of this kind of love, followed by the outworking of self-centredness, is also the real root of racism. This article will explore the questions, “Where is love from?”, “Where has love gone?” and “How can it be brought back?”

## Where is love from?

*“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”<sup>12</sup>(1 John 4:8)*

The kind of Agape love Martin Luther King spoke about is from God.

## Where has love gone?

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

*“God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”<sup>13</sup> (Romans 5:5)*

That kind of love has largely gone out of our relationships. Many people do not believe in God and his way described above anymore, or they trust in a false, self-made god. The real root of racism is found in the absence of God's love in our lives. Without His Agape love, we cannot love by our own strength those who are different from us. Many verses in the Bible make it clear that they are all equal with us in value.<sup>14</sup> Everybody is precious beyond measure because:

*“God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27)*

Racism and slavery are a universal problem. Arabs and Africans were slave traders as well as Whites.<sup>15</sup> Tragically, the church has often failed to be the only true custodian of God's love. The Archbishop of Canterbury confessed to institutional racism in the Church of England.<sup>16</sup> Could this be similar to that moment when slavery was abolished under the leadership of William Wilberforce, a practising Christian? This was achieved only with the help of black abolitionists, like Olaudah Equiano, Ottobah Cugoana and others from Britain's first Black political organisation.<sup>17</sup>

Dr Tony Evans<sup>18</sup>, a black American Christian pastor, speaker and author, describes the present catastrophic situation in poignant words. They are taken from two different videos<sup>19</sup> and summarised here: At the core of all of this is a spiritual problem (see 2 Chronicles 15:3-9). The crisis came about as a punishment for the failure of the religious leadership. The established church generally endorsed slavery for too long. Bible institutes were created that did not allow blacks to join for a long time. No wonder that those who graduated from them corrupted the

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taxes). Government would count only three-fifths of slaves, and not all of them, as the Southern states, who wanted to gain more seats, had insisted: <https://www.heritage.org/the-constitution/commentary/what-the-constitution-really-says-about-race-and-slavery>

<sup>10</sup> He was a liberal Christian who led a questionable moral life: <http://discerninghistory.com/2018/04/was-martin-luther-king-jr-a-christian/> However, he was spot on with the only remedy. All truth is God's truth and can be used wherever it is found.

<sup>11</sup> <https://theconversation.com/why-a-fractured-nation-needs-to-remember-kings-message-of-love-68643>

<sup>12</sup> In this verse the word Agape is used for love.

<sup>13</sup> “us” refers to practising Christians.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-about-equality/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://conservativewoman.co.uk/arabs-and-africans-were-slave-traders-too/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/11/justin-welby-tells-synod-he-is-sorry-and-ashamed-over-churchs-racism>

<sup>17</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sons\\_of\\_Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sons_of_Africa)

<sup>18</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony\\_Evans\\_\(pastor\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_Evans_(pastor))

<sup>19</sup> <https://youtu.be/O7y4RD43vKA> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nxhZGnnZw8>

institutions they founded or joined. As late as 1986 black people could not talk on Christian radio stations. This only changed in the USA when James Dobson<sup>20</sup>, founder of Focus on the family, intervened.

We would not even have a racial crisis in America if the Church had not failed to deal with this sin, like God calls it in His Word.<sup>21</sup> We often believe the right things but do not display them in the right way. We need a kingdom reset. No justice no peace. That is true but so is, no forgiveness no peace. God has to fix the Church house first before he can fix the White house.

## How can love be restored?

At the heart of the restoration of love is a return to God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ alone. Such a renewal leading to eternal life is a gift from God. It cannot be earned by good deeds as religions teach. The reason for this is simple: When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they spiritually and physically died and as a result were separated from Him.<sup>22</sup> In a sense, Adam as the federal head of humanity, was our leader and therefore we too suffer under his bad leadership. As Adam's descendants we are also affected by the "Sin Virus." In a similar way, today's citizens suffer from bad leadership in the past, even though they did not personally contribute to it.

From a Biblical and genetic perspective, all children of Adam are of one and the same race, even of the same colour. Its different shades come from various degrees of melanin.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, we are all spiritually dead in the sight of God. Spiritually dead people cannot do good deeds when examined from His holy, just and perfect perspective! The only One left who can turn around this tragedy is God Himself. That is exactly what He did through Jesus Christ on the cross! He paid the punishment for our sins through his death and resurrection on the third day.<sup>24</sup> If you believe this good news you can experience true spiritual life. Jesus will become your perfect new leader and you will benefit from him without your personal contribution. Good deeds are then done out of thankfulness, not to earn the right to be forgiven. This is why everyone needs to hear the good news.

Jesus is much more than a prophet! He was not afraid to heal a man with leprosy by touching him and saying, "be clean". A sick woman who became ritually unclean touched him and got healed. Jesus touched a dead girl and raised her to life again.<sup>25</sup> His healing touch went out from Him, making those clean and whole who were unclean, diseased and even dead! Instead of being affected by our impurity, His purity is contagious!

Dr Tony Evans said in light of the tragic death of George Floyd: "Don't try to change a nation if God can't change your heart."<sup>26</sup> Protest against evil in a righteous way, like Paul did in Acts 16:35-40. We must protest but then we must act. Here are practical things to do, based on the standards of God:

- Establish in your own heart that you want to be part of the solution. Reconciliation is followed by service: Do something together with someone who is different from you. Serve somebody else together.
- Connect with other families that are different from you. Teach your own family to judge people on the content of their character not on the colour of their skin. Serve another family worse off than you are, so you are again unified in a common purpose.
- The churches must do the same thing but on a cooperate level. A black and a white majority church can, for example, adopt a school and serve it together.
- Connect in the public sphere. We need a multicultural impact on society by black and white churches together. People may still choose to go to a majority black church because they prefer the style compared with the one in a white majority church.
- Challenge civil leaders to speak and act in a way that fosters unity."

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<sup>20</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Dobson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Dobson)

<sup>21</sup> The Bible does not condone slavery. See here: <https://www.zachariastrust.org/does-the-bible-condone-slavery>

<sup>22</sup> Genesis 2:17

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUyA8TeR1Yg&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>24</sup> John 1:29, 11:25-26

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 8:1-3; Mark 5:21-43

<sup>26</sup> His statements are again summarised from these two videos: <https://youtu.be/O7y4RD43vKA>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nxhZGnnZw8>

If you find yourselves trapped in the “us - and - them” thinking you immediately need to confront it. It may not have anything to do with racism.<sup>27</sup> If you notice jealousy, somebody else’s pain without doing anything about it, problems in your marriage, with your children, in your relationships, with denominations, if you feel uneasy around certain people, judge yourself and repent if necessary by resisting and going the other way. Otherwise it shows itself in more of your behaviour. The Bible says if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.<sup>28</sup> Confront others wisely if you see the same happening in them.

A number of good things have been achieved by the global protests. For example, the officers involved in the brutal murder of George Floyd were arrested and charged. Numerous statutes of former slave traders are being removed. Comedians have apologised for racist jokes. Difficult public and private conversations about race and privilege are happening. But before we pad ourselves proudly on our shoulders let us consider this:

The phrase “*Black Lives Matter*” is totally true and must be identified with. It is right to protest against ongoing racism worldwide. The movement has to be applauded for raising renewed awareness of what is never acceptable. However, numerous other beliefs<sup>29</sup> of the BLM movement cannot be supported by practising Christians. Would it therefore not be better for them to demonstrate independently to avoid any misunderstanding? As an alternative, the new slogan *#BlackLifeMattersEverywhere* is now used by practising Christians, by followers of Jesus according to the Bible. In this way they urgently stand up against tragedies the BLM is silent about, such as black on black killings in Chicago, killings of black Christians in Nigeria,<sup>30</sup> ongoing killing of unborn black children by abortion.

Has what begun as peaceful, justified protests been hijacked by politicians too? Evidence is emerging that this could indeed be the case.<sup>31</sup> Are we who live in Western nations not all still involved in a type of 21 century slave trade? The clothes we buy are often made by the poor, under harsh working conditions and for little pay in other countries. The food we eat is frequently grown by the poor under questionable circumstances. Our own fruit and vegetables are harvested to a big extent by poor workers on low wages from less fortunate countries. People from there are regularly doing the low paid jobs in the service sector. The energy we use to power our many gadgets is generally produced by polluting the planet. So do our travel habits by public transport, cars and planes. Those who aim to live greener, cleaner and healthier pay a price the poor cannot afford.

*“. . . We are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us. . .” (Romans 3:23 – The Message)*

We need to topple ourselves from our own pedestals! Let us not think that we can bring about peace on earth in our own strength. God alone will eventually do that at the second coming of Christ. Until then, however, let us humbly be a light for Him in the darkness, in His wisdom and power. Jesus said to his followers

*“Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16 - The Message)*

## Conclusion

At the heart of racism lies a systemic absence of unselfish Agape love, followed by the outworking of self-centredness in society as a whole. That purest form of love comes from God who is love. Agape love has gone missing with devastating effect because of a lack of faith in Him. Racism is condemned in the Bible in the strongest terms. The only way to restore Agape love lies in the return to God through repentance and faith in Jesus. It is not religion we need but a personal, loving relationship with Christ our Saviour and Lord. This will lead to an active social involvement that brings about Biblical justice. The church needs to model this path of restoration. Only then can society follow its example and begin to experience healing and unity. May God show mercy to us all!

For comments and questions please contact the publishers at:

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<sup>27</sup> These thoughts are a summary from part of a discussion on racism between Carl Lentz and Bishop T.D. Jakes. The publishers disagree with the prosperity gospel of the former and the view of the Oneness of God of the latter but fully endorse the truth spoken here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HVdg9ThNAI> ( 1:17:00-1:22.55

<sup>28</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:31

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.deliveredbygrace.com/three-reasons-why-christians-should-reject-blacklivesmatter/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://news.barnabasfund.org/At-least-20-Christians-killed-in-four-day-Fulani-militant-spree-in-16-Nigerian-villages/index.html>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Fkx40Sfefw&feature=youtu.be>