

# PASTORPEDIA™

*Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders*

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## ***Racial and Political Prejudices***

### **I am scared to write this**

At least a little afraid, in the sense that I write this early in November, and I wonder what will happen, before you read this, in the media or on the streets or even in churches that complicates the racial tensions even more.

It is a shame on us, and sometimes a bad mark for the church, when even those who say they follow our Savior say or do mean things that make our Savior gulp.

We are disciples and followers of the One who loved the Samaritans, touched the lepers, had lunch with tax collectors-cheaters, gave His life for all of us, and is very direct with us in His written Word about love and kindness and forgiveness.

We must live and talk and respond as He modeled and directs!

And on racial or color issues, there often are blind spots, habits that need to be broken, apologies that need to be given, and fences that need to be torn down. In the wonderful, uniting name of the Savior, our help in time of need.

Like now.

*Seeking peace and unity,*

*Knute, with Jeff and Jim*

## ***What are the hidden ways that Christians stay with their prejudices, and how do they show at church?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- Any categorization of people is laced with prejudice, so anytime we say “those people” or “that group” or “you know what ‘they’re’ like,” we’re hanging onto our prejudices in one way or another.
- I see this happen at church sometimes: We will change our dialect and how we act toward a person, based on their race. So suddenly we’re talking or acting funny, or doing weird gestures that we would not normally do. We’re not simply being ourselves, but trying to be who we think they understand, and it really doesn’t work.

I have a friend who tells me a joke: “When does a white person look the most prejudiced?”

Answer: “When they’re trying not to be.”

What he’s saying is, just be yourself, quit trying to act like you’re in a different group; and love people for who they are.

- When we refer to people by their color or ethnicity-- like, that “black family” or that “Hispanic family.”
- Churches sometimes show *people of color* as objects of charity and don’t show them as leaders or normal... e.g., there’s always a picture of the impoverished child of color somewhere else in the world.

### ***Jim Brown***

- We categorize people with phrases and groups and use words like “us and them.”
- Our church platforms don’t represent the different cultures our cities do.
- We form opinions about people groups.
- We don’t care enough to acknowledge racial trials and struggles in our preaching.
- We think we are right in our views and have not taken the chance to sit and listen to people of different ethnicity.
- We do nothing to help their causes.
- We have no friendships with people of different ethnicity.
- We remain distant from helping others.

### ***Knute Larson***

- They can secretly think God’s favorite race is their own, especially white Americans. None would say it that way of course, but we can act that way. If that is really set in their minds, they see no need for expansion or outreach that includes other ethnicities. I remember racial jokes being told after the service and outside the building when I was a child. Even then I knew this could not be right. Blind spot indeed, or just plain sinful pride.
- Many are that way about their political affiliation, sometimes depending on what part of the country. They can easily assume that any Christian, or at least church person, thinks the way they do about policies and candidates.

- A church movement or fellowship can easily, even unknowingly, be proud in a simple way of their distinctives and emphasis. That can easily breed a wrong kind of separatism and aloofness.

## ***What should we address from the pulpit or in leadership meetings?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- We need to lay down a theology of race. How does God view race? What does it mean to be created in His image? It is important to realize that as I understand another race or culture, I'm actually understanding a work of God.
- We need to denounce racism publicly. When something egregious happens or even when it doesn't happen, making sure people know without question where the church of Jesus Christ stands, and how we land on these issues!
- We need to listen to and include minority voices in our church. Some of our churches have no minority voices, and so we're going to have to lean into people outside the church. Some of our churches are more racially integrated and we need to give voice to that. We need to help people understand how other people feel.
- We need to admit our own blind spots and address them. I know I have to do that. I started a podcast with a couple of dear friends, and we talk very bluntly about racial issues. There are things I don't see and understand, and vice versa, so we actually have that conversation publicly because it helps people to understand.
- If you can work as peers with a person that is a minority, or even under their leadership and vision, it makes a strong statement. So, if I'm the "powerful white pastor" who invites some people of color into a circle, I'm still in a position where I'm the guy doing them a "favor." However, it's a powerful thing when they're doing me a favor and I go to their event, and I serve under their leadership and their vision. It's a powerful statement to the church at large that my brother is my brother and we work together and serve one another.

### ***Jim Brown***

- Everything that is applicable to your city when it is relevant.
- Stand firm against racism and apologize where we have done wrong.
- Acknowledge our own shortcomings.
- In leadership circles, make sure racism is nowhere to be seen or practiced.
- Have a conversation and educate yourselves with people of different color and race.
- Invite people of different ethnicity to speak in your circles.
- If the front page of your city is talking about it, then address the topic with a sound biblical theological message.
- We had a panel that included a white police officer, a black pastor, and a black man, and a white pastor on a Sunday morning and we talked candidly about racism. It was our way to address the issue head-on.

### ***Knute Larson***

- Probably more than we usually do! Division problems have grown, not lessened.
- We must address prejudice or attitudes that cast negative thoughts on others, as if they are by nature less important than we are. That would be true even with some church leaders who perhaps cannot tell that their neck is red. One on one candor with love may be needed.
- We must address racial dislike or negative thoughts about others. They should be hit head on when there was a text that applies or a problem that exists.
- Not specific people who have bothered you or opposed you. That is unfair to address from the pulpit, unless you give them equal time to speak!
- National trends often creep into the church—materialistic goals in life, pornography or almost that, definitions of success, ethnic jokes, putdowns of nonbelievers. Even nonchalance about evangelism and missions.
- A true leadership team includes very honest assessments of the habits and outlooks of the church, with prayers and plans meant to improve the place! The pastor must lead this way!

### ***Why is this so important? Or is it?***

#### ***Jeff Bogue***

- It's important. It's a cultural sin and a cry that we need to address and be a part of.  
It's no different than addressing issues of addiction or morality.
- It's important because people are wounded. There are deep wounds and a deep mistrust even within the body of Christ. It's up to me to live at peace with all men, so if I can be a part of helping and loving somebody, I need to do that.
- The church is hardwired to have an answer to this. We're taught to love each other, we're taught to look beyond skin, and we know that God looks upon the heart. He doesn't look on outward appearances. This is our core theology and DNA, so if we can learn this and do this and be a part of moving this forward, it's for sure to be helpful!

#### ***Jim Brown***

- Because we have dropped the ball for too long on this issue.
- Because all tribes and nations are God-created precious people.
- Because all people are loved by God, and are made in His image.
- Because every soul matters and is loved by God.
- Because many people need Jesus and this gives us a chance to show all people that Jesus is worth following.

### ***Knute Larson***

- Yes, it is so important, for it is connected to the two greatest commands from our Lord to all of us—to love God with all our heart and love others as ourselves.
- Some churches have almost closed their doors to other races or political parties. Someone different would be uncomfortable there. That makes this serious.
- It is important because life and our country has so many divisive issues today. People take sides with ease and often belligerence, and can carry those attitudes into the church easily.
- It is so important because we are the church, the body of Christ, the house of love, a mission of grace. “Let it shine, let it shine...”

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