



How do we respond to racism, hatred and bigotry?—Part 1

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I have been heavy hearted over the past two weeks as a result of the displays of racism, hatred and bigotry that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia. Racism, bigotry and hatred are clearly opposed to the values of Jesus and His kingdom. Every few months it seems like we're reminded that we still have much work to do in recognizing, valuing and respecting people of all races.

Author

The weekly eNews is provided by CGGC Executive Director Lance Finley



I've invited three dear brothers to share with us at this important moment. One of the best things we can do right now is listen. One of the most exciting things God has been doing within the CGGC over the past decade or so, has been to bring us a greater racial diversity. This has been God's grace to us as a body, and I believe that the Lord is preparing us and positioning us to play a role in the racial reconciliation He will bring into our society and world.

I've invited pastors Art Battle, Toddrick Gordon and Antoine Lassiter to guest blog today and next week in order to help us listen well during this moment. We live in a world of news cycles and the news will move on to the next big event very soon, but the problem of hatred, racism and bigotry will continue to live on until we repent and believe. I'm so grateful for these men and their ministries and I'm humbled that they would take the time to share with us in order to help us all understand how to respond in this moment that has brought so much pain and division to our already divided country.

Today you will hear from Pastor Arthur J. Battle and Pastor Toddrick Gordon. Art Battle is the founding pastor of Gethsemane Christian Discipleship Church (<http://gethsemanecdc.com/>) in Toledo, OH. Toddrick Gordon is the Community Outreach Pastor at Urban Light Community Church (<https://www.urbanlightmuncie.com/>) in Muncie, IN.

Next week we will hear from Pastor Antoine Lassiter, Lead pastor at Think Kingdom Church (<http://www.thinkingkingdomchurch.org/>) in Concord, NC.

I'm praying that we have ears to hear and hearts inclined toward real repentance, action and change. Let's listen well.

Christ's Peace,
Lance

Racism, overt and covert, is real and a form of false teaching

by Arthur J. Battle.

As I stood at the counter looking down at the magazines under the cash register about to check out at a convenience store in Memphis, Tennessee, two middle-aged white men said to me, "What are you looking at? You know you can't read!" I turned and looked at them with anger and resentment in my eyes as my female friend pulled me towards the door to leave. I was 16 years old and had just experienced my first encounter with racism. It was my first encounter, but would not be my last, and it would shape the way that I viewed relationships with white people for years to come. Why did they say that I couldn't read? They didn't know me or anything about my background, my upbringing, my parents, my academic pursuits, my education, my dreams, my goals, my personal pursuits, or anything other than me being a 16 year old black male standing at a counter looking at magazines. Racism was not just something that I saw in the movies, or heard older black people talk about, or read about in books, it was now something that I had experienced first-hand, and it only took minutes to infect me with its venomous sting that would require the Blood of Jesus to heal the spiritual, emotional, and relational wound that I had experienced and those that were yet to come.



Pastor Art and Jamile Battle

After the Charlottesville tragedy, I was asked by Lance Finley to write a post regarding Racism and God's Kingdom from my perspective as a 46 year old black male. In order to write about racism I had to be willing to relive some of the racist experiences I have had since my first experience in Memphis, Tennessee in 1987. Over the past 30 years I have learned that "Driving While Black" is a reality you can't avoid; speaking to white Toledo Police Officers with intelligence and clarity can get you arrested for "Disorderly Conduct" and "Resisting Arrest;" educational degrees only make you an "Educated N-Word" in some circles; being the "Angry Black Man" should be avoided if you are around white people; that I am "different from other black people" for some reason unbeknownst to me; and that being followed in a store and repeatedly asked "Can I help you?" is a form of customer service not given to my white counterparts on as regular a basis as I receive it.

Webster's Dictionary defines racism as "a belief that [race](#) is the primary [determinant](#) of human traits and capacities and those racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race." I have always and will continue to believe that racism is ignorant and divisive because it is founded in fear and based upon nonsense. Your race does not make you inherently more intelligent or superior to any other race, but it is your fear of losing historical power and control achieved through racist agendas and discriminatory practices that is being revealed.

Racism is especially dangerous and destructive in God's Kingdom, and more specifically in His Church. Racism is a device and scheme that Satan masterfully uses to divide God's people on all levels and weaken the power that united believers should have in God. Racism is a reality that cannot and should not be avoided or ignored because it affects a person's ability to live out the Great Commandment (*Mark 12:28-31*) and Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20*) as a disciple of Jesus Christ. As a black man, I strive to love God with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength daily, but when it comes to "loving my neighbor as myself" it becomes more difficult when my neighbor believes that he/she is inherently superior to me because he/she is white. As a believer, I struggle inside the Household of Faith with the question, "How can you say you love God with your whole heart, soul,

mind and strength, but hate or believe your neighbor is inferior to you because of race?" I believe that love trumps hate and that in order to fully live out the Great Commission and make disciples, I must love everyone; but it can become exhausting to try to love those who hate you because of your race. It can also create an inner turmoil because to truly love your neighbor you must open yourself up to a relationship with people of other races to love them as Jesus did, but in opening yourself up to those relationships you also open yourself up to the covert racist who hides his/her racism around you but lets it out when around "familiar faces."

Covert racism and overt racism are different, but both affect God's Church in devastating ways. The overt racist tells you to your face through their actions that he/she does not "like your kind" and does not want to have anything to do with you because you are black. The covert racist is much different. He/she can be in your presence, be kind and pleasant, and even claim friendship with you, but when he/she is around "familiar faces" that person can tell a racist joke or speak ill of people of other races and think nothing is wrong because he/she "has a black friend." "Having a black friend" for a white person does not negate racist behavior, belief or actions towards other black people, just as "having a white friend" for a black person does not negate racist behavior, belief or actions towards other white people.

The Apostle Paul in *Galatians 5:9-10* tells us that false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough, and that he trusts God to keep believers from believing false teachings. Racism is false teaching and one of Satan's weapons used against God's Kingdom and His Church to get us to live separate and divided rather than together and united.

Father, let no weapon formed against us prosper, and silence every racist voice and action with Your Love (*Isaiah 54:17*).

Overcome Racism and Hate with Prayer and the Gospel of Jesus Christ

by **Toddrick Gordon**

Greetings and God bless you!

I would like to share some of my thoughts with you today about the issues of racism and social injustice. As an African-American pastor, I can only pray for those movements that claim to be followers of God but continuously display hatred and racism towards their fellow mankind.

We are faced with some difficult times ahead of us and the only way that we can overcome the hate in this world is by displaying the love of Jesus Christ to all. We must strive to be obedient to God's word and trust that the Holy Spirit will guide us in truth and humility. I am reminded of this in the story of Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (*Acts 8:26-40*): two different men from two different races; but because of their desire to seek God, their lives crossed paths and Jesus was glorified because of this divine appointment.

God gives us a voice to speak against racism and social injustice but we also must realize that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities in the spiritual realm. Our greatest weapons are intercessory prayer for those who are lost and proclaiming the gospel which is our truth.



Toddrick Gordon

In the book of James 1:19-21, “19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

Jesus Christ died and was resurrected for all of humanity and let our love become known not just by what we say but also by our display of love to all of humanity.