

## Why I refuse to ignore racial diversity

Before God called me into ministry, I served as vice president of corporate communications for a very successful business on the north side of Indianapolis. One of my largest and most significant assignments was to create a new corporate identity program. The company was growing by leaps and bounds by acquiring new ones, so it became necessary to create a branding to bring them all together under one name.

The project included two objectives. First, I had to create one overall image that would apply to all the subsidiaries and second, that image needed to preserve some level of individual personality. After months of examining various designs, I settled on a solution. I chose one graphic image to be used by all the companies but each one had its own individual color.

It was a good solution, but not because it was my idea, but because it was God's idea first. In the very beginning God created mankind to bear His image and yet He created us with different colors. So, this begs a very important question: "Why is culture demanding that we ignore our differences? Why are we being told that we should ignore differences in gender and color? Where did we get the idea that to recognize these differences is somehow wrong?"

I believe that kind of thinking steers us in a wrong direction. To deny our God-created differences is not a virtue, it's an indirect attack on God's plan for mankind. Whether it's gender or color, we should see beauty in our differences and learn to celebrate them instead of being offended by them. God made us different for a very good reason: His greater glory. So, to give Him the glory He deserves and instead of suppressing our differences, we should strive to celebrate them.

Here are four biblical reasons why:

### **1. We are all created equal in God's image.**

Genesis 1:26 "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;'" Being created in God's image means that all of us were made with characteristics that can display His nature. We all share in God's communicable attributes such as life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, and justice. This means that He values all of us equally. So we should strive to see every human being with dignity and honor because we all share in His image. Since all people are made in God's image, every human life is of infinite and equal value (Gen. 9:5–6).

### **2. Gender and ethnic diversity are God's idea.**

Genesis 1:27 "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." That is not confusing, God chose two genders to express and manifest His one image in different ways.

The Apostle Paul wrote this in Acts 17:26 "and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth," The word "nation" is the Greek word (ethnos) from which we get the English word ethnic. So Paul makes it clear that we all came from one man (Adam) and yet God made us with what are clearly differences.

### **3. The Bible is clear: Prejudice and racism are sins.**

Since our value of equality and our differences come from God, any kind of prejudice or attitude of self-superiority is sin. The prophet Jonah is one example of the Bible condemning such attitudes. Although a prophet of God, he was racist against the pagan city of Nineveh and was rebuked by God. (Jonah 4:1–11). Also, the Apostle Paul reprimanded Peter to his face for ignoring the Gentiles because of his preference to eat with the Jews (Gal. 2:14). So, racial hatred is not new and it has always been sin.

#### **4. The gospel is for everyone.**

The only true solution to discrimination and bias is the gospel. Rioting will never fix the problem – only the gospel can. Only the good news of Jesus shatters all racial barriers that separate people. This is exactly what Paul told the Galatians. In chapter 3 he says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Paul didn’t mean that the gospel stopped people from being who they are, but that it displays a beautiful equality of all people because of our relationship to Jesus Christ.

This becomes a little clearer in Ephesians 2:14–18 “For He Himself (Christ) is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall ... so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity ... for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.”

The very aim of salvation is to shatter the barriers that divide us and to bring us into a peaceful unity. In other words, God designed diversity to exist in a beautiful harmony.

That’s the lesson I learned over 20 years ago and I’ve never forgotten it. We can and will see evidence of God in every ethnic group; various colors, one overarching company. To erase color is to destroy the beauty of God’s plan. So let’s don’t ignore our differences, let’s embrace them. As you go about your life, pay close attention to the importance of color and let it be a reminder that color shouldn’t divide, it should unite all who are created in God’s image. God’s desire to bring the beauty of all ethnicities together in His identity is why I refuse to ignore our differences and choose to celebrate them instead.

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