

Can Blacks and Whites Live Together in Peace? — September 24 & 25, 2016
Follow-up Bible Studies

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Day One: Proverbs 9:8, 13:1, 17:10, 25:12, 28:23, 29:1

- Both being confronted and confronting someone is tough. The word the Bible often uses for this exchange is “rebuke;” we read about it in all of these proverbs. Which verse is easiest for you to swallow? Why? Which one strikes you as most harsh? Why?
- Re-read each of these proverbs imagining you as the one in need of rebuke. Do you receive rebukes as a wise and discerning person? Or do you foolishly reject them? Does your response depend on the issue? Imagine someone rebuking you for behaving in a prejudiced or racist way. How does this feel? Pray you’d receive such rebukes with an open and repentant heart.
- Re-read the proverbs again, this time imagining yourself as the one rebuking someone because of a racist act or remark. How can you know whether such a rebuke will be fruitful? What further guidance does Paul’s treatment of Peter in Galatians 2:11-14 provide? Pray you would be brave and faithful to confront people in a Biblical manner.

Day Two: Matthew 16:13-20

- Set the scene of this text (13). What did Jesus ask his disciples (13)? What was their response (14)? What question did Jesus ask next (15)? What did Peter alone answer (16)? Summarize Jesus’ reply to Peter (17-19). Which of his pronouncements over Peter move you the most? Why? What did Jesus then order all of the disciples to do (20)?
- This was a shining moment for Peter. After his incredible confession of faith, Jesus esteems him and promises an amazing legacy. However, this is the same Peter who went on to deny Jesus and to segregate Gentile believers from Jewish believers. When it comes to working toward racial reconciliation, we are all works in progress; we will sin and stumble. Talk to the Lord about where you are on this journey; ask him for grace to continue to engage when you want to withdrawal or regress.

Day Three: Acts 10

- Describe Cornelius and the vision he had (1-6). How did he respond to this event (7-8)? The next day, what was Peter doing (9-10)? Describe his vision (11-16). What happened next (17-20)? Summarize Peter’s conversation with Cornelius’ men (21-23).
- Describe Peter’s arrival at Cornelius’ home (23-26). What changes in belief and practice did Peter express to everyone (27-29, 34-35)? How did Cornelius explain his reason for hosting Peter (30-33)? What else did Peter testify about Jesus (36-43)? What was the Holy Spirit up to during this time (44-46)? How did the Jewish believers respond (45)? What happened next (47-48)?
- Living together in unity and valuing diversity are works of the Holy Spirit. Notice how the Spirit worked on those in this story: Cornelius and Peter had visions and Gentiles were filled with the Holy Spirit. Pray that the Holy Spirit would work on you in order to bring much-needed racial justice and unity to our nation.

Day Four: Acts 11:1-18

- Today’s reading is a continuation of the story from day three. Who else heard about what was going on with the Gentiles (1)? What happened to Peter in Jerusalem (2-3)? He partnered with God in a great moment of unity and then he was shamed for it. How does this make you feel? When you do the right thing in the name of unity and racial justice, how do you cope when people criticize your actions? Pray that a desire to partner with God would trump any fear you may have of how others perceive you.

- Summarize Peter's retelling of his vision and his visit to Cornelius' home (4-17)? How did his critics respond (18)? Re-read Peter's words in verses 15-17. Ask the Lord to examine your heart and reveal where you may "stand in his way" as he seeks to bring unity and respect for diversity to the world, particularly within the church. What do you sense him speaking? This may be an appropriate moment to engage in identificational repentance.

Day Five: Ephesians 2:14-22

- Who is our peace (14)? What about Jesus makes him an agent and source of peace (14-17)? Which of these attributes fills you with the most gratitude for Jesus? Why? Perhaps this moves you to seek greater unity and racial justice in the church; what is one way to make this happen? Through Jesus, what do we have (18)?
- Our old designation was "foreigner" or "stranger." In Christ, what are we now called (19)? What is the foundation and cornerstone of this household (20)? Describe the way we are joined together in Jesus (21). Even now, what is God doing among us (22)?
- Take some time to meditate on Jesus as "the chief cornerstone." Also imagine yourself as a member of the household built upon Jesus, living alongside people of all different ethnicities. Imagine eating a meal together. How does this make you feel? How can you make this vision a reality? Pray for grace to walk it out.