

# The Scars of Racism

*“Tragically, too often in the past evangelical Christians have turned a blind eye to racism or have been willing to stand aside while others take the lead in racial reconciliation, saying it was not our responsibility. (I admit I share in that blame.) As a result, many efforts toward reconciliation in America have lacked a Christian foundation and may not outlive the immediate circumstances that brought them into existence. Our consciences should be stirred to repentance by how far we have fallen short of what God asks us to be as his agents of reconciliation.”*

**BILLY GRAHAM, “RACISM AND THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH”**

Poverty is one of many scars left by our country’s history of racial injustice. While racial and ethnic tensions are long-standing problems in every culture, here in the United States our history of enslaving people, Jim Crow era segregation and ongoing racism have had lasting effects on many people of color. These effects leave many without the options and opportunities that people of the dominant culture have benefited from for generations. The Bible has much to say on the issue, and Christ’s death and resurrection offer a potent path for healing.

This study is meant to be a first step in understanding this complicated issue. We will be reminded that God created all nations and that one day every nation will be represented in heaven. We will examine God’s call to Christians to step into the pain of our brothers and sisters from every tribe, tongue and nation and live out the unity we have in Christ.

## Scripture

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

**ACTS 17:26**

All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.

**PSALM 86:9**

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

**ROMANS 10:12-13**

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

**JAMES 2:8-9**

Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.”

**ACTS 10:34-36**

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

**REVELATION 7:9**

Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

**GALATIANS 6:2**

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

**1 CORINTHIANS 12:26**

## Discussion

1. Acts 17:26 states that God created all mankind through one man. How should we view people from different ethnic backgrounds?

2. What is God's heart for the people of the world?

3. How do we define favoritism?

4. How could favoritism keep us from loving others as ourselves?

5. Why do you think God preserves tribes and nations in heaven?

6. How well has the American Church suffered with and carried the burdens of those who are wounded by racial and ethnic hatred?



5. Andy Crouch speaks to individual attitudes of racism and the systemic legacy of racism. Why is it important to understand both?

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 Practice

**READ** James 2:1-13

**PRAY** Ask God to reveal times in your life when you have shown favoritism. Take time to confess anything that the Lord has shown you. Pray for God to reveal systemic favoritism in our culture. Pray for opportunities to build relationships and listen well to those from different ethnic backgrounds.

**JOURNAL** Write down your observations from James 2, as well as observations about personal or systemic favoritism you have observed or experienced.

**DO** (*Choose one or more*) Rent a movie about slavery or the civil rights era. Watch the news and take note of any favoritism or injustice. Learn something new about Native, Asian, or Hispanic Americans or others who have been marginalized in American history. Look at the resource page of [optionstogether.org](http://optionstogether.org) for more information on ethnic minority marginalization.