



The Stewardship Coach Volume 7 / Issue 24



This edition of The Stewardship Coach is entitled, ***The Church and Racial Reconciliation***. What follows are my opinions.

I cannot remember when I have ever struggled to write a Coach like I have this one. Do you feel the same as you approach your preaching? As a white person, you simply don't know what to say or do. Silence, I agree, is not acceptable. However, I refuse to allow what I call, "The Narrative," to dictate what I believe and the actions I take.

By "The Narrative" I mean the message from Hollywood elites, to the main-stream media, to social media and from many politicians. "The Narrative" drives thought and content. Anyone who disagrees is banned, censored and pillared. Sadly, many Evangelical leaders have fallen for "The Narrative" and are ignorantly attempting to redefine the Church's role in society.

Let me first stipulate the obvious, **George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police is a travesty that demands justice.** Justice in America often takes longer than we like but for the most part justice does prevail. The wheels of justice are moving upon the policemen that were involved in this senseless loss of life. It was wrong. Period. Racism, in any form, aimed at any group, white or black is wrong. Let's be frank, it is not just wrong it is sin.

I firmly believe the Church is the only institution on earth to have the means to address the ills of our society. We have the power of the blood of Jesus and the double-edged sword of the Word of God to guide us! Jesus isn't just *an* answer He is the one and only answer! How do I know that? His saving grace saved me and changed my heart about race relations.

It starts with honest dialogue. Listening to others, even debating issues like, is racism a systemic problem in America, is White Privilege the problem, are needed and necessary.

To that end, I am doing two things. First, check out my friend Jason Bunger's post in the Bonus Section entitled, ***Moving Toward Racial Reconciliation***. Jason, a white man married to a minority woman, has a unique perspective and he helps me better understand issues I am blind to.

The second thing I wanted to do is to start a discussion around what we in the Church should and can do about racial reconciliation. So, the June 8th Monday Mornings With Mark The Stewardship Coach at 11 AM will be on, ***The Church and Racial Reconciliation***. Joining me will be my friend and pastor of Hope Church in Dayton, Oh, Dr. Jason Bunger.

We are going to be talking about the following:

- Is America a racist nation?
- Should white people apologize for white privilege?
- What actions can churches take to address racism and more! Join us for this discussion at, <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/7081778876232214541>

I believe we in the Church can work to solve this by continuing to share the love of Jesus!



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Monday Mornings With Mark The Stewardship Coach will be live at 11 AM June 8th. To register, go to <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/7081778876232214541>.

Missions and Ministry Moment

(aka offering talk)

#4 of The 16 Offerings of Summer! Let's make every one count. Here is mine.

Living Up to the Biblical Ideal

As we start our time of worship through giving, I want to ask, "Is your giving living up to the biblical ideal?"

The Barna Institute released a study on America's giving patterns entitled, *The Generosity Gap*. In their introduction comes this quote,

"From a spiritual standpoint, generosity, according to the Scriptures, is, among other things:

- **A hallmark of a good life:** "The generous will prosper" (Prov. 11:25)
- **A natural response to God's generosity:** "Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us!" (1 Chron. 29:14)
- **A benchmark of our love for God:** "I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. When you did it to one of these, my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!" (Matt. 25:34-40)
- **A principle way to obey Christ:** "Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2)"

Those are high ideals. Yet after this quote, they state, "**Most U.S. Christians today do not live up to the biblical ideal.**"

I don't know about you, but I don't want to be in the "most U.S. Christians" segment. I *want* for all of us that our giving would be a benchmark of our love for God. All of us must continually ask ourselves if our giving is living up to the biblical ideal.

This is one reason we take up the offering every week here. It gives you a chance to live up to biblical ideals. So, as we take up this week's offering, let's not be like "most" Christians. Let's live up to the biblical ideal.

Bonus Section

Dr. Jason Bunker is the Senior Pastor at Hope Church in Dayton OH. Jason will be appearing with me on our June 8th group teaching time. The following article is taken from a position paper he wrote in 2018 entitled, ***Developing a Strategy for Multi-Ethnic Ministry***. What follows is one portion of his paper. His points are timely today.

Moving Toward Racial Reconciliation

By Dr. Jason Bunker

Moving toward reconciliation is not easy, but it is critical. Tim Keller notes that many churches find it exciting to consider the possibility of being multi-ethnic until it comes time to make decisions. Decisions force us to define our values. Decision-making situations also reveal our cultural assumptions that come to the surface in the deliberating and implementation processes. However, a church that is committed to reconciliation can see great success, even though the processes may be challenging at times. At the time of this compilation, there are several strategic commitments that I am sensing we need to consider in pursuing reconciliation.

1. A Commitment from the Lead Pastor to Pursue Reconciliation

For years, I have listed on my bio the following statement: "*Jason's passion is to reconcile people to God and to one another by experiencing the word of God in an accurate, passionate and understandable way.* My primary goal continues to be to reconcile people to God and to one another through the gospel. The pastor must be cultivating and communicating the value of multi-ethnic ministry.

2. Prayerful Dependence

In John 17, Jesus prays to the Father on behalf of His followers. He petitions to God that "they may be one." There is much speculation about whom Jesus was referring to here. Some think He was referring to all Christians; others believe He was simply referring to the apostles. I am not sure exactly. But I am sure of this, Jesus knew that His people, even His disciples, could not "be one" without the intervening power of God. We must develop attitudes and opportunities to cultivate prayer to develop reconciliation.

3. An Attitude of Voluntary Displacement

Gospel-inspired voluntary displacement is the discipline of setting aside rights and privileges for the sake and betterment of others. In simple terms, it means, "*I am willing to give up what I want (or have) in order for you to get what you need.*"

We must continue to be willing to set aside our privileges and preferences to reconcile people to God and one another. One particular way to do this is to agree to not go to war over the "non-essential" matters of the faith.

4. Intentional Service and Invitations

We must also look for ways to demonstrate the grace and kindness of God intentionally. We are not merely seeking to do charity work. Instead, we are looking for opportunities to demonstrate justice and proclaim the righteousness

of Christ. Since the two most stable institutions in a community are the school and the Church, schools can be a natural place to consider long-term partnerships.

We also need to be more assertive at extending invitations to be shared and taught by minorities. Tony Evans observed how rarely whites sit at the feet of black teachers to be taught. To embrace reconciliation, majority-culture churches must extend invitations to minorities for friendship and education and not merely entertainment. We also can take advantage of multi-ethnic invitations that are extended to us in addition to extending invitations. Evans also noted that white ministries are better at extending partnership invitations to black ministries than they are about accepting them and partnering with the black ministries.¹

5. Music Ministry Enhancement

For our music to extend beyond our current culture, we must add musical personnel who can reflect who we are trying to reach and enhance the impact of our worship ministry. We must find a way to create a culture of celebration in worship that is typical in most Latino, African American, and Asian Churches.

I am becoming increasingly convinced that we have lost something when we quit singing hymns. We must sing/preach of the faith that has been handed down. The quickest way to become irrelevant is to define yourself and music only by the era in which we currently live. The hymns in most black churches are sung with more expressive reverence, slower pace, uplifted voices, and a sense of awe and hope.

6. A Leadership Team and Staff Committed to Diversity

We must strive to have a multi-ethnic leadership team and staff. Staff pictures and sermon downloads speak greater volume than well-worded vision statements. Staff photos don't lie. If we want to be a multi-ethnic church, we first have to strive to hire multi-ethnic staff.

7. The Lead Pastor must be Committed to Better Preaching

According to Bryan Loritts, effective preachers have two main characteristics. First, they address issues of race and diversity in the way the Bible addresses them because it is strategic for the Church's mission and vision. Secondly, they resist the temptation to "turn the pulpit into a sociological platform" and instead are committed to the good news of the gospel and the veracity of the text instead of the political opinions of the day. They do this by talking more about Christ than about culture.

I don't plan not to preach a series about reconciliation. Instead, I want to address issues of reconciliation as they arise in the consecutive expository passages. One scholar refers to this approach as "not giving someone a cube of sugar, but rather simply sweetening the tea by sprinkling it in and gradually stirring."

In addition to this, I have observed there are some practical steps I can take to improve my preaching to both majority and minority audiences. Here are some practical steps I am committed to doing in the upcoming season.

1. **Consider the marginalized.** In my study and in the pulpit, I need to be aware of the marginalized in our community and in the passage I am preparing. I need to take into consideration that Jesus has much to say to/about the marginalized, oppressed, disabled, rejected as well as women and immigrants. Jesus often speaks to those who are outside of the faith community to invite them to follow Him.

¹ Tony Evans Oneness Embraced.

2. **Spend more time with people in our Church and our community.** The business of church work and the discipline of study can cause me to disconnect myself from the world people unintentionally live in daily. I need to continue to acquire knowledge about our culture and the culture of others. I need to develop more relationships by showing up at more events and having more meals with people. Even though I am extremely busy, I cannot take shortcuts here. Empathy and language are learned by living among people. Mitchell writes, "All languages are learned best by living and identifying with the people who speak them. In a sense, one must, for a time, burn one's bridges and identify closely with the target culture group. When this is done, the nuances will be learned subconsciously."² Loritts says, "Proximity breeds empathy. Distance breeds suspicion."
3. **Be More Direct.** In adapting to the majority culture, I have lost some of my directness in the pulpit. I can be both tactful and direct. I need to remember that people are desperate each week for a word from God. We don't have the luxury of being vague.³ "Black congregations do not ask what the preacher's personal opinion is. They want to know what God has said through the preacher's encounter with the word."⁴ Preaching must be relevant. Great preaching starts with the here and now. The content should hit so close to home, that the preacher may be accused of meddling or betraying confidences. The black Church has survived neglect, corruption, distortion, and abuse simply because it was and is still so relevant to the needs of the people.
4. **Combine the Cognitive with the Cardiological.** We must preach to both the head and the heart. Accord to Michell, Black Preaching is effective because it contains: passion, storytelling, experience, painting pictures, empathy, addressing the needs of the listener, speaking directly to issues, and interacting with listeners (such as call/response, rhetorical questions).

In comparison (though not necessarily in contrast), white preaching is often (though not always) described as linear, sensitive to time, applied personally instead of corporately, and usually understood to allow listeners to come to their own conclusions and applications. Effective preaching must include the best of both formats. We must minister out of two roles, prophet and priest. In the prophetic role, we are preaching from God to people. Often this involves "affecting the comfortable." We also operate in a priestly function. We are preaching from us to us. This role involves "comforting the afflicted."

I am not an expert on multi-ethnic churches. But I am committed to them. Leading a church is never easy, but striving to lead a multi-ethnic church can sometimes seem insurmountable. It is like to pushing a car uphill, the moment we stop exerting with everything that we have, is the moment that gravitational force of the segregated church will roll back on us. I am not convinced that these strategies will work. But I refuse to do nothing and merely accept the status quo.

Colossians 1:28-29 "²⁸Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."

² Mitchell, Black Preaching, 82.

³ Mitchell writes "The modern intellectual style of trying to avoid being dogmatic by being tentative (in the interest of intellectual honesty and integrity) is a luxury ill afforded in the religion of the Black ghetto...The Black worshipper is seeking the answers to visceral questions on which life itself depends." 127.

⁴ Mitchell, 56.
