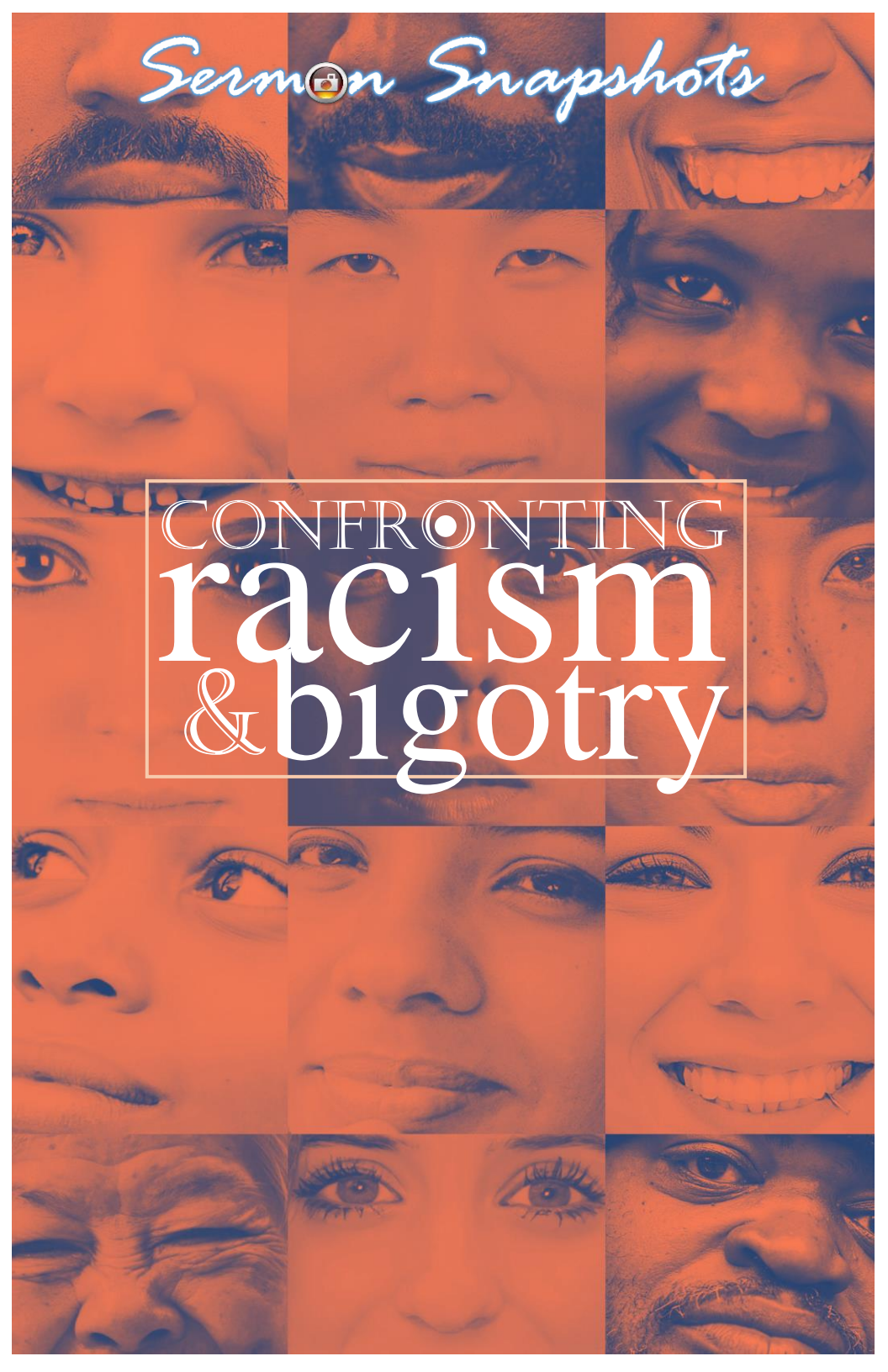


Sermon  Snapshots

CONFRONTING  
**racism**  
& bigotry



## RACISM AND BIGOTRY

Racism and bigotry are common sins. But contrary to what some would have you believe, these sins are found among EVERY race of men: White, Black, Asian, Semitic, etc. Such people have a hatred for &/or mistreat those of other races – e.g. those who look or talk differently or come from another country. *The Bible says that such behavior is sinful!* It is rooted in the fleshly side of man, & often leads to greater sins, such as violence or murder. In our text, we want to examine why racism is sinful.

**Racism violates the law of love.** We are commanded to love ALL men – without exception (Rm.13:8-10; Ga.6:10). Indeed, we're even commanded to love our *enemies* (Mt.5:44-48; Rm.12:18-21). The Lord also said that we are to treat others as we wish to be treated – which is what some call “the golden rule” (Lk.6:31; cf. v.27-36). *And, in case you are tempted to make an exception on the basis of race, consider these passages: John 4:1-9; and Luke 10:25-37.* Jesus showed in those passages that the Jews' lack of “dealings” with Samaritans must change; and that those of other races (or of mixed race) can sometimes be more compassionate than those of our own race!

**Racism violates the law of creation.** You see, racism holds that one race is “inherently superior” to all other races. But the Bible declares that ALL races of men are “brothers in Adam” (Gn.3:20; Ac.17:26). In fact, sometimes when I teach on this, I will challenge the thinking of the (hopefully few) racists among our brethren by asking two questions: “*What race was Adam and Eve? And how to you know?*” You see, many are conditioned by paintings and such that Adam and Eve were Caucasian (or white). But do we really know that? How do we know they were not black or Asian in appearance? The truth is, we don't know! It is enough to drive a racist insane, isn't it? There is another principle which comes into play here, and that is the fact that God looks at one's *character*, rather than his or her outward appearance (1Sm.16:7). Notice, too, that this was said about Eliab – *a Jew!* This must surely offend those who are anti-Semitic; but it is true, nevertheless! Indeed, the Scriptures declare that there are “good” and “bad” people of every race (Rm.2:17-29). One's racial background does not, of itself, determine one's worth!

**Racism violates the law of impartiality.** Our God is an impartial God! On the judgment day, He isn't going to care what color your skin is, or what your racial background is, or what nation you come from (Ac.10:34-35; Rm.2:11-16). *Now, if GOD is impartial, then what makes ME think I can be partial, prejudiced, bigoted, or a racist?* Indeed, we are called upon to be like God in our conduct. Further, we are COMMANDED to be impartial toward others (Jm.2:1, 8-10). To behave otherwise is the height of arrogance! In fact, the church of Christ is God's “coalition of the redeemed,” consisting of people from every race, tongue, and nation (Ga.3:26-29; Ep.2:11-16; Col.3:10-11; Rv.14:6-7). This is why we are told to “Go into ALL the world and preach the gospel to EVERY creature” (Mk.16:15). There is no room for partiality in The Great Commission!

**Racism violates the law of decency.** People who are racist in their thinking have no sense of human decency! Some *avoid* those of another race (Jn.4:9). Others go so far as to *mistreat* those who are “different” (Jm.2:1-4). In fact, some will call those who are “different” by *unflattering and offensive names*, such as, “the N-word” (cf. Ep.4:29). Still others are prejudiced against interracial marriage (cp. Nm.12:1-ff). As an aside, I do recognize that such marriages have their own peculiar challenges. But those challenges, for the most part, come about due to the prejudices of others!

Those who lack the common decency to treat all men with proper respect should consider the words of Jesus: “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (Jn.7:24). Or how about the words of Nicodemus: “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?” (Jn.7:51). Before I close let me add a few other remarks about racism: Racism is *an insult to God*, for ALL men are made in His image (Gn.1:26-27). Racism is *an insult to Jesus Christ*, for He died for ALL men (Jn.3:16). Racism is *an insult to the church of Christ*, for it is the COALITION of the redeemed (Ga.3:28).

To summarize, RACISM IS SIN! Our judgments of others must be based upon truth and right, rather than pre-conceived ideas about others (Jn.7:24). Indeed, the very word “prejudice” means to “pre-judge someone without the benefit of all facts. Let us be very careful that we do not fall prey to this deceptive sin, and its evil consequences!

## “NO ONE REALLY CARES!”

A while back, I was away in a gospel meeting, and was talking to one of the members there. He had been viewing our You-Tube videos, and noted that there is a great deal of racial diversity here. I agreed, noting that we have white, African-American, Latino, and Asian (hope I didn't miss anyone!). I also pointed out that we have rich, poor, male, female, military, civilian, executives, and common laborers. My friend asked me how does all of this diversity work for us, and I said it works just fine! So, he asked me, what is the secret to making it work? And I said, ***“It works because no one really cares.”*** In this article, I want to expand on that thought.

You see, I truly believe that the more we focus on our differences, the more pronounced they become. Conversely, the less we focus on our differences, the less pronounced they become. ***Indeed, this “lesser focus” can reach a point where “no one really cares” about any of the differences that the rest of the world seems to focus upon.*** I have long believed that this is the real secret to improving relationships among people.

Of course, I speak of differences that are of no consequence to God, such as race, national origin, income level, etc. I hasten to add that there are differences that **DO** matter! We cannot live in such a way as to make human sinfulness of no consequence. We cannot accept those who persist in sin as though they were faithful to God (cf. 1Cor.5). But so many of the differences that the rest of the world places such a premium upon are, in reality, nothing! We should not let the world squeeze us into its mold with respect to such things (cf. Rm.12:2).

Now, I am not so naïve as to think that racism will ever be completely eradicated from the world. There will always be those who choose to persist in the sin of racism. Jesus once said, “The poor you have with you always” (Jn.12:8). If I can borrow and adapt that phrase, “The racists you have with you always.” I'm not defending this; I'm only saying that this is a reality of our sinful world. But it does not have to be that way for you and me! As Christians, we can overcome the world, and live in true unity (Ga.3:26-29).

Taking this a step further, I am of the opinion that racism is not natural. On the contrary, it is a learned behavior. People become focused on race because they are TAUGHT to focus on race. I grew up in the 1960's and 1970's, when great strides were made in race relations. Those gains did not come easily; but they DID come! Are things perfect? No. But I know for a fact that they are MUCH better! As proof, I cite again the diversity of this congregation.

When my son was born, my wife and I determined that we would simply not discuss racial differences with him at all. It was not difficult, ***because we really did not care!*** Our son had no clue that there were any kind of racial tensions in the world until he went to school. Then, one day, he came home and asked us, “Why do some people not like black people?” ***Now let that sink in!*** He had no clue, because we never made an issue of it. In fact, he had a friend who was black. He spent the night at our house; and our son spent the night at his house. ***These two boys simply did not care!*** Brethren, I am telling you, that is the key!

When we obsess about race, and make everything about race, we keep the pot stirred. So, I say, “Just let it go!” You are NOT my African-American (Asian, Latino, etc.) brother in Christ; you are just my brother in Christ! It simply does not matter to me what color you are, or how much money you make, or how fancy you dress for worship. ***I simply do not care about such things!*** And I am not alone in such thinking. That is precisely why this church works!

*“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father”* (Ep.2:14-18).

**-Lanny Smith**



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Sunday Bible Study: 5 pm  
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