



# Racial Reconciliation Sunday

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“For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh, he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death.”

*Ephesians 2:14-16, CSB*

# Intentionally Cultivating Multiethnic Churches

*By Jamaal Williams*

In 2016, I was called as lead pastor of a predominantly white church nestled in an inner city with a half-black, half-white demographic. I saw this as a unique opportunity for a vibrant church in the SBC to model reconciliation and the unity of the Spirit.

The pursuit of diversity is not an easy path. Not only does it challenge heart-level issues of prejudice, but it challenges lifelong preferences regarding music, expressiveness in services, preaching style and more. We've faced significant challenges in this journey, but here are a few things we've tried to do to overcome obstacles:

## **1. Shepherd people toward diversity. Becoming a multiethnic church is a journey.**

When it comes to issues of race, people are in different places on that journey. Each person in your church has a story that shapes how they view the world. In the pursuit of diversity, it is imperative that you gently shepherd your people to understand that diversity is actually at the heart of the gospel.

## **2. Listen to people.**

Part of shepherding people is having one-on-one conversations with them. I've had people send scathing e-mails and threaten to leave the church. But, instead of sending them our theological position paper on racial reconciliation, I've invited them to come to my office so I could listen to them. I've seen the eternal value in having personal conversations with people about diversity.

## **3. Ask for grace and forgiveness.**

Many of the challenges we've had to overcome are the result of the man in the mirror. Sometimes we've gone too fast or too slow, and we've spoken too strong and too soft. I sin and offend members, just as they sin and offend me. We all must depend on the same Savior, and we should be the quickest to repent and ask forgiveness. One of the greatest apologetics in the next 20 years will be diverse, multiethnic churches. As cultural divides continue, and likely deepen, I believe people will ask "Why?" when they look at our churches and see blacks and whites, Hispanics and Asians, young and old, women and men, rich and poor, standing, living, laughing, weeping, walking— together.



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