



# Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of  
Niles

Volume 2/Issue 1

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

## WELCOME

Welcome to Volume 2 of the FBCN Newsletter or the “current new normal” editions. There will be some changes in the format because we can now meet in limited numbers. The *Watchman* section by Pastor Chuck Vitel will be suspended for the time being as we are now able to gather and hear the word preached. If you did not join us this past weekend to hear Pastor Brandon Myers Message on Titus 1, I encourage you to watch a replay now available on the FBCN website or Facebook page. In that light we would be remiss not to acknowledge all the work that Al Nuzikowski has put in to bring the ministry up to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Be sure to thank him, he did this while still performing his daily consulting duties while most of us were at home.

The new format will still include this week’s reading as well as the scripture passage that will be used, if available, for the upcoming Sunday. This will give you the opportunity to prepare before you arrive.

This week’s reading is Psalm 77 (ESV), titled, *In the Day of Trouble I Seek the Lord*. To the choirmaster: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph.

I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me.<sup>2</sup> In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted.<sup>3</sup> When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, my spirit faints.

*Selah*

<sup>4</sup>You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak.<sup>5</sup> I consider the days of old, the years long ago.<sup>6</sup> I said, “Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart.” Then my spirit made a diligent search: <sup>7</sup>“Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable?<sup>8</sup> Has his steadfast love forever ceased?

Are his promises at an end for all time?<sup>9</sup> Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?” *Selah*

<sup>10</sup>Then I said, “I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.” <sup>11</sup>I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.

<sup>12</sup>I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. <sup>13</sup>Your way, O God, is holy, What god is great like our God?<sup>14</sup> You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.<sup>15</sup> You with your arm redeemed

your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. *Selah*

<sup>16</sup>When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; indeed, the deep trembled.

<sup>17</sup>The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side.<sup>18</sup> The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook.<sup>19</sup> Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen.<sup>20</sup> You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The scripture that will be used by Pastor Brandon Myers this week is Titus 2.

**Join us for a virtual prayer meeting on Wednesdays at 7:00pm.**

**Wednesday Bible Study ([Click Here](#))**

**Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230**

**Password: 409807**

**One tap mobile**

**+13126266799**

**Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230**

**Password: 409807**

Throughout the media the word “pandemic” has been replaced now with the word “racism.” It’s the common topic not only in the media but among society as a whole. How can we recognize it or digging deeper, do we embody it? First according to a poll taken by Gallup at least some Americans view race relations between whites and blacks at a current low point over a 20 year span. Because racism is a subject prevalent in the public eye, we first need to define what racism actually is.

I feel that I can speak to this topic having witnessed both as an unsaved white middle class teen/young adult and as a mature Christian. I grew up in a white middle blue collar neighborhood. My high school was 3 blocks from the house I grew up in on the southwest side of Chicago. As it was the only public high school for 16 miles we were the collection point for every ethnicity, race and street gang on the southwest side of the city. This mix of groups bussed into an all-white blue-collar neighborhood was a caustic mixture. During the 1970’s a week did not go by where some racial tension would erupt and the school needed to be evacuated or put on lockdown. The tensions hit their peak my senior year when multiple fire alarms emptied the school daily and riots broke out between the various groups. A fellow student was thrown from a moving bus and it was not uncommon for someone to be shot or thrown through a store window. This culminated in a police presence of officers in full riot gear backed by CPD helicopters and semi-sized paddy wagons. That’s my story but how did we get to that point?

First, let’s talk about how the culture defines racism. According to Merriam-Webster, racism is defined as follows:

*“1: a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race*

*2a: a doctrine or political program based on the assumption of racism and designed to execute its principles*

*2b: a political or social system founded on racism*

*3: racial prejudice or discrimination”*

In addition, the Cambridge Dictionary defines racism as, “the belief that some races are better than others, or the unfair treatment of someone because of his or her race.”

The core component of these definitions is a belief in some sort of ethnic superiority and/or a prejudice or unfair treatment of another because of his or her ethnicity.

However, today many are arguing that the definition of racism is changing. The cultural elites have been working overtime to redefine racism as not just prejudice, but prejudice plus power. In other words, you cannot be racist if you do not have power, or are in a position of power. This is the new cultural definition of racism which is being pushed.

As Christians, it is always best to try to define things biblically. If we break down what racism actually entails, then biblically speaking, racism is an outflow of pride and hatred, specifically hating another person because of their ethnicity. The Bible speaks strongly against pride (Prov 8:13; 11:2; 16:8; Mark 7:20-23).

The Bible also speaks strongly against hate. Biblical language of hate includes the concept of prejudice or bias (cf. Matt 6:24; Luke 14:26; Rom 9:13; Eph 5:29). Hatred that is not directed against evil is sin (cf. Prov 12:1; 26:24; 1 John 3:15; 4:20). Therefore, the reason racism is sinful is because it involves pride and hatred of one’s fellow image bearer of God, due to his skin color or geographical origin.

We defined racism in light of society now its important to define the other

word mentioned – Christianity. We are using the following definition from *Focus on the Family*, because we will be referring to them later as well.

“The term “Christian,” as we understand it, refers to anyone, man, woman, or child, who trusts in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior and Lord and who strives to follow Him in every area of life. As evangelicals, we place great stress on the importance of an individual’s **personal relationship** with Jesus Christ. We believe that this relationship is lived out by way of prayer, study of God’s Word, fellowship with God’s people, and service to others in Jesus’ name. There’s an important sense in which Christian faith has to be expressed in the context of community with other believers. But in the final analysis, it’s an intensely personal and individual matter, not a question of church membership or doctrinal orientation. The Bible backs us up in this regard: **“Whoever** calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13; Joel 2:32).

Here is the key part to the definition, “But in the final analysis, it’s an intensely personal and an individual matter, not a question of church membership or doctrinal orientation.” *Focus on the Family*, began its article with this question that was sent to them on racism. “How can a nation that was built on slavery and that’s still full of racial discrimination today possibly have ‘biblical roots’? I’ve been hurt by racism in so-called ‘Christian’ America, and I just don’t understand why so many conservative evangelicals say this country is based on ‘Christian values.’ As an African-American who has faced racial hatred, I find this perspective unbelievable. If *that’s* Christianity, then I want nothing to do with it!”

*Focus on the Family* responded, “Before saying anything else, we want you to know that we understand your perspective and empathize with your feelings. Racial hatred and discrimination are more than just glaring social injustices. They’re also a direct

affront to God and an insult to the entire human family. Racism runs directly counter to everything the Gospel represents.”

Is this the type of testimony that we want to have? And yet it was practiced and even taught at some of the most biblically-based colleges. This thinking permeated the teaching of many a Christian pastor up through the 1990s. I have witnessed it first-hand. I had the opportunity to share the gospel to an inter-racial couple that were living together. Upon making a profession of faith I told them that they could not live together and would need to separate until they could make a commitment to marry. The man moved out that weekend and they set a date to marry several weeks later. When a date was decided, I approached the pastor of our church about performing the marriage, laying out the whole story from conversion to obedience. He refused to conduct the service. He was taught at a fundamental university that inter-racial marriage was a sin.

In 1999 that university published the following ground-breaking statement, for that institution, “For almost two centuries American Christianity, including, (name removed), in its early stages, was characterized by the segregationist ethos of American culture. Consequently, for far too long, we allowed institutional policies regarding race to be shaped more directly by that ethos than by the principles and precepts of the Scriptures. We conformed to the culture rather than provide a clear Christian counterpoint to it.

“In so doing, we failed to accurately represent the Lord and to fulfill the commandment to love others as ourselves. For these failures we are profoundly sorry. Though no known antagonism toward minorities or expressions of racism on a personal level have ever been tolerated on our campus, we allowed institutional policies to

remain in place that were racially hurtful.”

Here was a institution that was turning out pastors, evangelists and Christian leaders that admitted that it had made decisions based on the philosophy, culture and/or moral beliefs of society and not on the word of God. The preceding was laying the groundwork for the following article that I shared with a pastor and which has been circulated to several churches. As you read this article I want you to remember this, “But in the final analysis, it’s an intensely personal and individual matter, not a question of church membership or doctrinal orientation.” This is something for which we will answer personally.

**JUNE 12, 2020**

### **A Compassionate, Counter-Cultural, Christian Response**

by [Kevin Huang](#)

In conversations about race, too often we treat disagreement as evil, and we attribute the worst motives to those who disagree with us on complex issues. This is the way the world responds to disagreement, but Christians should be different.

What follows are some balancing principles to remember in the wake of George Floyd’s tragic death, and the current nation-wide turmoil that has come as a result of it:

- **To grieve and lament over the tragic death of George Floyd is *not* an affirmation of the cultural narrative.** Jesus wept over Lazarus but for different reasons, which were unbeknownst to the on-looking professional mourners ([Jn 11:35](#)<sup>L</sup>). The issue is *how* and *why* we grieve. Satan has always attempted to infiltrate the Church and lure her away at points where the world seems to share a common cause ([2 Cor 11:14-15](#)<sup>L</sup>). He is both a liar and a murderer from the beginning ([Jn 8:44](#)<sup>L</sup>). He is behind George

Floyd’s death, and he is also behind the cunning cultural narrative that exploits George Floyd’s death.

- **To mourn with those who mourn does *not necessarily* mean protesting with those who protest, or posting on social media with those who post on social media.** [Rom 12:15](#)<sup>L</sup> is not a politically correct maneuver, it is a personal expression of compassion.
- **To vehemently denounce and oppose the evil of racism and the error of ethnocentrism is *not* to automatically agree with secular and worldly philosophies that seem to do the same, such as “Critical Race Theory” and “Intersectionality”.** There are biblical reasons to oppose something that the world also seems to oppose, while also rejecting the reasons why they oppose it. Motives, presuppositions, and underlying ideologies matter ([2 Cor 10:5](#)<sup>L</sup>).
- **To have a true holy indignation is to “*not* let the sun go down on your anger” ([Eph 4:26](#)<sup>L</sup>), to “*not* give the devil an opportunity” ([Eph 4:27](#)<sup>L</sup>), to “*never* pay back evil for evil” ([Rom 12:17](#)<sup>L</sup>), to “*never* take your own revenge” ([Rom 12:19](#)<sup>L</sup>).** If the unbelieving world doesn’t see a radical difference between its own outrage and the Church’s zeal against sin, something is wrong. Pride, self-righteousness, and personal vengeance are tell-tale fruits of sinful anger, not righteous anger. Christians may be angry and Christians may protest, but “be angry [and protest], and *do not sin*” ([Eph 4:26](#)<sup>L</sup>).
- **To peacefully protest is a civil decision *not* a Christian duty, a human work *not* a Gospel work.** The former is a unique social privilege, the latter is a universal Christian mandate. Christians are

free to work for social reform, but social reform is *not* spiritual Reformation. The two must not be confused (Mt 22:21<sup>L</sup>).

- **To be silent is *not* always to be complicit and guilty.** Jesus was silent before His accusers (Isa 53:7<sup>L</sup>; Mt 27:14<sup>L</sup>; Mk 15:5<sup>L</sup>; Lk 23:9<sup>L</sup>). To be silent is *sometimes* to mourn (Lam 3:28-29<sup>L</sup>). To be silent is *sometimes* to be wise (Prov 18:13<sup>L</sup>). To be silent is *sometimes* to be humble (Eccl 5:2<sup>L</sup>). To be silent is *sometimes* to be prayerful (Rom 8:26<sup>L</sup>). To be silent is *sometimes* to wait on the Lord (Lam 3:26<sup>L</sup>). To be silent is *sometimes* to hope (Psa 62:5<sup>L</sup>). To be silent is *sometimes* to speak God's Word and *not* the world's agenda. It is far too simplistic to assume that silence is *always* complicity and guilt.
- **To call for biblical discernment and definitions in this discussion, and to refuse wholesale/blanket acceptance of cultural ideas and assumptions is *not* less compassionate, but more (Phil 1:9-10**<sup>L</sup>). God is love and love is defined by God (1 Jn 4:8<sup>L</sup>). Therefore, true love is theological. Compassion is not truly loving if it is not also biblical. Let us be as "quick to hear" God's perspective as we are to hear the marginalized (Jas 1:19<sup>L</sup>).
- **To say that the killing of George Floyd was a grave sin because it took the life of a man made in God's image (Gen 9:6**<sup>L</sup>) is *not* to minimize the heinous nature of the crime by de-emphasizing racial prejudice as a *possible* motive. Rather, to emphasize the biblical nature of the offense is to treat it *more* seriously, not less (Psa 51:4<sup>L</sup>). When a biblical category for condemning sin is no longer enough, we should recognize

that we may be in danger of calling for penance rather than repentance.

- **To say that mankind is one race, i.e. the human race, is *not* to dismiss real differences between cultures and ethnicities.** Rather it is to affirm that there is an essential unity in our humanity even amid much diversity, all of which has been designed and determined by God (Acts 17:26<sup>L</sup>), and all of which is to be reflected in the 'new humanity' of the Church (Eph 2:11-22<sup>L</sup>; Rev 5:9<sup>L</sup>). Biblically speaking, as human beings we are *all* in a way like George Floyd, and we are *also* all in a way like his killer, Derek Chauvin. Not by way of shared experience or shared guilt for the same crime, but *because we all share in fallen humanness* as descendants from Adam (Rom 5:12<sup>L</sup>, 15<sup>L</sup>; 1 Cor 15:22<sup>L</sup>).
- **To value the image of God in man means to courageously stand against murder, abuse, and racism, but *also* the cursing of our fellow man (Jas 3:9-10**<sup>L</sup>). Murderous, abusive, racist *words* reflect a murderous, abusive, racist *heart* (Mt 5:22<sup>L</sup>; 15:18-20<sup>L</sup>).
- **To condemn the evil of racism is to specifically condemn the biblical sin of "personal favoritism" and "partiality" (Jas 2:1**<sup>L</sup>, 9<sup>L</sup>; Deut 1:17<sup>L</sup>; Lev 19:15-16<sup>L</sup>). This can be over skin color or social status, profession or political association, ethnicity or income, morality or personality, sub-culture or style, personal opinion or privilege. Even an oppressed minority who is calling for justice can themselves be guilty of ethnic prejudice against other ethnicities (Jon 4, Hab 1:13<sup>L</sup>).
- **To call for justice, if it is biblical, is to call for God's perfect justice against every form of evil, public or private, societal or personal, popular or unpopular.** This means

righteous indignation over *every* sin, including racism and abortion, but also pride, theft, bitterness, sexual deviancy, idolatry, deceit, malice, envy, coveting, rebellion, slander, selfishness, greed, etc. (Jas 2:10<sup>L</sup>; 1 Thess 5:22<sup>L</sup>). Let those of us who call for God's perfect justice likewise acknowledge that we ourselves are accountable to the same standard (Mt 7:1<sup>L</sup>; Jas 4:11-12<sup>L</sup>).

- **To admit that we could never fully understand someone else's experience does *not* mean that truth is relative (the postmodern idea of standpoint epistemology), *nor* is it to say that our ministry cannot be sincere or effective.** Just because our position in life is different than another's does not make our expression of compassion any less authentic, meaningful, or helpful, so long as it comes from the heart and accords with the Scriptures. The Bible and the Gospel are transcendent. Jesus alone is our perfect, sympathetic High Priest (Heb 4:14-16<sup>L</sup>). We point others to Him, not our own experience, for "we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord" (2 Cor 4:5<sup>L</sup>).
- **To question or push back on the theory of systemic racism and oppression is *not* to deny or justify the sin of racism, *nor* is it to say that racism doesn't exist in this country, *nor* is it to say that our own hearts are immune to committing such a sin.** True humility acknowledges that our depraved hearts are capable of any sin, but it also doesn't force us to acknowledge a guilt that isn't necessarily there (Rom 12:3<sup>L</sup>). True humility acknowledges that God alone perfectly knows all of our motives (1 Cor 4:4-5<sup>L</sup>). Therefore, true humility also refrains from definitively judging the motives of others.

- **To point to the future hope of perfect justice is *not* a trite way of dismissing current issues.** This is what the prophets did without fail, and yet they never minimized their own suffering (Lam 3). To admit that we ourselves cannot accomplish perfect justice by human means is not to excuse or ignore the sins that confront us in this fallen world. Rather, it is to increase our longing for *another* world. The Christian's hope is a Messianic hope, an eschatological hope, a future hope ([Rom 8:24-25](#)<sup>L</sup>).
- **To remind the Church that the Gospel is the only real answer is *not* to simply bypass or ignore the obvious social problems that exist in our world and opt for a superficial, spiritual solution.** The Gospel addresses sin. Sin is at the heart of all of society's problems. Therefore, addressing sin with the Gospel is not a superficial answer. Rather, addressing society's problems *without* the Gospel is a superficial answer. May we not be ashamed of the Gospel as God's all-sufficient tool of salvation for all ethnicities, both Jew and Greek ([Rom 1:16](#)<sup>L</sup>).



KEVIN HUANG

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## PRAYER LIST

### ✓ Continuing Prayers for loss:

All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who have recently lost loved ones due to COVID 19. The family of Mary Grace Reyes.

### ✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs:

Rita McManus, Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez special request, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria, Anne Benliro's co-worker's husband—Oscar with Covid-19.

### ✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs:

The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support of the church during the Virus

### ✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries:

BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy Bartolome, Pastor Chuck and Sue Vitel

### ✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs:

Leonard Hatfield, Carol Pelfrey's family, Daniel Ruehlman, George Bizadellis

### ✓ Continuing Prayers for:

The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families, Erwin & Elizabeth Lickman living together at The Wellshire Nursing Home

Mylin and Errol Lardizabal - Are both nurses and Errol did get assigned to work in ICU to take care of Covid patients, he will have to work on the unit for at least a month.

Liza Mitchell in her role as a health care worker at Vi Independent and Assisted Living Facility she has responsibility over those with Covid 19 .

Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis. Pray for those still working that God will protect.

**A Note of Praise:** Joe Varilla has completed his studies during the pandemic shutdown and has graduated Summa Cum Laude. **Congratulations Joe.**

**If you have prayer requests or updates on your family, we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.**

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