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Understanding

By Rick Joyner

The word *understanding* came from the merging of two words, *standing* and *under*. The inference is that we cannot understand someone else until we stand in his or her place. To understand another, we must try to stop seeing from our perspective to see from theirs. With the Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman tragedy, we have one of the greatest opportunities for understanding and a significant opportunity to gain a victory over racism.

The Deadly Enemy

Racism is one of the ultimate evils of the human heart. This is because racism is rooted in two of the worst evils: fear and pride. We become a racist when we start seeing ourselves as superior because of our race or other external, superficial reasons. We also become racists because we begin to fear those who are not like us. When you combine fear and pride, you have one of the most deadly concoctions that ever perverted the human soul. It is the single factor that has released more death and destruction on earth than any other in history through the wars and other conflicts they have caused.

When Jesus was asked about the signs of the times, one of the main factors that He said we would have at the end of the age would be **“nation would rise against nation” (see Matthew 24:7)**. The Greek word translated **“nation”** here is *ethnos* from which we derive the English word “ethnic.” He was not talking about countries going to war with each other, but of ethnic conflict being one of the major signs of the end of this age.

Jesus also said that the **“harvest is the end of the age” (see Matthew 13:39)**. Of course, this speaks of the great ingathering to the Lord at the end, but it also speaks of the time when all of the seeds that have been sown come to full maturity. The good and the evil, the wheat and the tares, are all now coming to full maturity. For this reason, we

can expect to see one of the greatest evils in history—racism—coming to full maturity. We can also expect to see a counter-balancing good coming to maturity as well.

One of the great hopes that we are given by biblical prophecies is that there will be a people revealed who are the antitheses to this great evil of racism. This is biblically given as the second most important reason for the church. The most important reason for the church is to be the temple of the Lord where He dwells among men and can still do His works through men. The second most important reason for the church is to be **“a house of prayer for all the nations” (see Mark 11:17)**. The Greek word translated **“nations”** here is the same *ethnos*. This means that His church will be a place where all ethnic groups come together to seek Him.

America is a nation that is made up of all nations or all ethnic groups, cultures, religions, political persuasions, and just about any other way you can categorize people. This is one of our greatest opportunities, as well as one of our greatest advantages and strengths. It is also one of our greatest threats, if we do not use the opportunity rightly.

As a nation, we have fought some of the ultimate battles against the great evil of racism, including our most deadly war—the Civil War. With each battle or war against this evil, there has been a victory so far, and progress has been made. However, we are yet a long way from complete victory, and we must not cease this good fight until victory is complete. The positive change for most of America has been dramatic over the last few decades. However, just as Joshua learned at the battle of Ai, we must hold the spear out until the victory is complete and not relax until it is finished. The Martin/Zimmerman tragedy presents us with another opportunity to fight this evil and take ground that we cannot afford to miss.



More Than Race

The Bible actually does not recognize race but ethnic differences and tribes. This is actually more accurate because two people can be of the same race but be profoundly different in their nature and worldview. These are based mostly on such things as culture, education, experience, and history. An example of this was dramatically revealed in a great teaching moment for our country—the O.J. Simpson trial.

I did my own little study after that trial. Almost 100% of the white people I asked were sure that O.J. was guilty of murder. Almost 100% of the black people I asked, who were from the inner city, were just as sure that he was innocent. However, blacks that were raised in the suburbs almost all thought that O.J. was guilty. So, this was not just a race issue, rather more of a culture issue. This is important to see if we are going to understand, because it reveals how wrong we can be about someone if we profile him or her just because of their race or other superficial appearances.

Standing

In our legal system, to bring a suit or appeal for justice, you must have “standing.” That means you must have a personal reason for the suit. This is so we don’t all start suing merely because we knew someone who was injured or treated unjustly. We ourselves must be the ones injured or treated unjustly. Of course, this is extended to immediate family members. So, what is my standing that gives me authority to address this issue?

First, those of another race have attacked me because of my race. I prevailed in the legal confrontation and do not consider myself wounded because of it. Almost all of my experiences with those of other races and cultures have been very positive. I am not addressing this from a wounded position. However, almost 25 years ago, I was alerted to how racism was one of the most deadly forces in history and would be one of the main issues we face at the end of this age. I then began an extensive study of racism and have often traveled to places that were historic gateways for this evil, such as Germany, which was subdued by the extremely racist Nazis, and South Africa, which was subjected to apartheid for such a long time.

In a *Bulletin*, I cannot begin to address all that I have learned and am continuing to learn about this ultimate evil of racism. However, I just want to touch on a few of the basics and show how an understanding of them can be used for great good.

If you do not know much about me personally, I am a white southern male, brought up in the suburbs in a moderately racist home. I did not know my parents were racists until I brought a black friend home with me when I was on leave from the Navy. They treated him honorably while he was there, but when he was gone they let me have it for doing such a stupid thing. I was very surprised by their attitude, but I was able to ask enough questions in the conversation to learn a great deal about my parents that I did not know.

Growing up, I had friends whom I would categorize as extreme racists. I had relatives who esteemed the KKK, and I suspected some of being secret members. I thought it was wrong, but it was possibly more out of rebellion that I then resolved not to be a racist. I don’t think I was given more noble motives until years later when I was shown how destructive this force is to both the racists and the victims of it.

Even so, I admit that with the recent controversy over the Martin/Zimmerman tragedy, I have had many racist thoughts surface in my own heart. So I am not claiming to be totally free of this myself, but I am resolved to get free. I’m still fighting this fight, and I have come to conclude that just about everyone else is too whether they admit it or not. That is why we can’t waste these opportunities to address the things that surface in our own hearts and in our country. The truth can set us free, but it has to start with us being seekers of the truth and lovers of the truth, not just what may make us feel better about ourselves. However, here is a major factor that we must consider about humans:



Most people act or react because of what they feel, not because of what they think.

Because of this, even the facts that have been illuminated through the trial of George Zimmerman are not the only factors and may not even be the main factors dictating actions and reactions to it.

For this reason, I will be as candid as I possibly can in what I am about to share. If I offend anyone from any group, even my own heritage, it is not intentional. I am simply seeking truth. Neither is my goal to defend a position, but instead to get free of this terrible and deadly evil of racism.

Judging Others

It is not true when people say that The Bible tells us not to judge others. In fact, as is often the case in many popular sayings and beliefs about The Bible, the opposite is true. What it tells us is not to judge others unrighteously. To judge righteously is to judge with enough depth, understanding, wisdom, and perspective to judge accurately.

Self-righteousness is one of the primary evils that The Bible relentlessly attacks. This was the primary enemy of The Word Himself when He walked the earth. Of the deadly sins, self-righteousness is up there with racism. It is also rooted in both fear and pride, even the pride that would have us automatically assume that we are right or have the right perspective. The same Bible also teaches that we “see in part, and know in part,” (see I Corinthians 13:9), so no one has the whole picture. This means that to have the complete picture, we have to put our part together with what others have. It also means that we must be humble and teachable, which is a prerequisite for receiving God’s grace.

In the parable where Jesus said we should not try to get a speck out of someone else’s eye when we have a log in our own, He was not telling us that we should not try to get the speck out of someone else’s eye, but to get the log out of our own first. Then we can see to get the speck out of someone else’s eye. In regard to racism, I think that I have gotten the log out of my eye, but I admit that I still have some sticks in it that can be clouding my vision. So even if, by this *Bulletin*, I am trying to help others with specks, it is with the realization that I am also trying to get more specks out of my own eyes too.

It was not Martin Luther King, Jr. who first said that we should not judge others by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. It was the Apostle Paul who wrote this first, though he phrased it slightly differently, “from now on we judge no one according to the flesh, but according to the spirit” (see II Corinthians 5:16). As Christians devoted to walking in the truth, this is mandatory. We must look beyond anyone’s race or culture to see what is in their character in order to judge them correctly. Racism is one of the primary veils over our hearts that would keep us from doing this.



Bigotry is not just about race. Religious bigotry is the same evil rooted in racism by which we think we are better than others because of our faith or the group or movement that we are a part of, even within our religion. If we are in a better group that has more truth, then it is by grace. We are told that “God resists the proud,” so becoming proud about it can cause a fall from the grace that has been extended to us. When grace is turned into self-righteousness, it basically perverts the truth.

As one who has spent considerable time trying to understand President Obama because he is such a major force in our times, I think he is remarkably free of racism considering his background and the church he spent twenty years as a member of, which is almost a bastion of racism. I do think he has some racist tendencies, but I would expect more. When he uses the race card, it is usually more out of political motives than from his own racism. I do think he sincerely wants to be free of this and would like to help America get free of it, but I would disagree with his methods, which could be counter-productive and create worse divisions.

I think we must also preserve the remarkable victory over racism that was gained with the election of our first black President. Regardless of how his presidency ends up, this was a great victory and must be preserved.

To Reverend Wright and others of the liberation theology perspective, if I had their experience, growing up black in the times that they did and suffering the humiliations that they did, I think I would have been even more racist than they are. I’m not agreeing with their racism; I am seeking to judge them rightly, not with condemnation but judging them accurately after the spirit they are of.

From where Reverend Wright has come from, he may have won more battles in his heart against racism than I have, to only be as racist as he is now. I was never humiliated or treated sub-humanly by anyone of another race the way that almost every black person in America has likely been treated at some point. So, in God’s eyes, Reverend Wright may be far more righteous in overcoming this evil than I am. Even so, it still does not negate the obvious present racism.

Though it may appear that there is far more racism in the black community now, and recent polls indicate that this is what the majority of Americans think, I think we should consider that they may have far more to overcome than the white community does in America. We must see this from a historical perspective if we are going to see it accurately. Many are adverse to this because they think it only brings up old wounds, but that is exactly what we must do if these wounds are to ever be healed so that they do not continue to rise up and strike us.

King David’s Bout With Racism

In II Samuel 21, we have the remarkable story of how a famine came on the land of Israel when David was king. So David sought the Lord for why this famine had come.



The Lord replied that it was for the sins of Saul and his bloody house because he had killed the Gibeonites, an obvious racist attack. To remove the curse on the land that brought the drought, David had to go to the Gibeonites and make atonement for this injustice. This gives us an important insight into healing such cultural wounds.

First, King David was not guilty of this sin against the Gibeonites, nor was his generation. However, they suffered from the famine and had to make it right to remove the curse. Why? The Lord said that the sins of the fathers would be visited to three or four generations. Why? This does not seem just. However, this is about justice—the justice required for healing cultural wounds. Here are some takeaways from this event:

- Every sin creates a wound, and cultural wounds can wound an entire culture.
- Time does not heal wounds. They must be cleaned, dressed, and closed to prevent infection.
- The reason why the Lord allows them to go on for generations is so that a generation can arise to heal the wound. If this does not happen soon, the infection—poison and bitterness—spreads.
- The wounds of slavery in our nation have never really been addressed, cleaned, and closed, as they needed to be. The infection from this open wound is still affecting the whole body of America.
- This is also true of some of the other wounds from racial injustices like The Trail of Tears.

Again, the continuing negative affects of these great wounds in our history will not go away until we face them, clean them, close them, and keep them well-covered until they have fully healed. This is part of what The Great Commission is for as we make disciples of all nations, not just individuals. Getting healed of such influences is how we personally have our minds renewed. The same is true of a nation. These are things that must be taught and implemented, or we will continue to recycle and suffer the same consequences generation after generation.

In Psalm 115:16, we are told, **“The heavens are the heavens of the LORD, but the earth He has given to the sons of men.”** This is why God will not do things on the earth unless we pray. If we seek Him, He promises that we will find Him. If we do what is right in His sight, He will bless us, whether individuals or nations.

If we want to shut Him out, we can do that too. However, we suffer the consequences just as we are now as a nation. One of the most remarkable scriptures in The Bible is Revelation 3:20 where Jesus is standing outside the door of His own church and will not come in unless someone opens for Him. Will we open to Him?

All of the evil that comes upon the earth is not God’s doing, but ours. If we turn to



Him, He will help us. He gave us the Holy Spirit as “the Helper,” not “the Doer.” If we want to align with God and His kingdom, then we must do it His way. We are told in Psalm 89 that righteousness and justice are the foundation of the Lord’s throne. Righteousness is doing what is right in the sight of the Lord, and justice is ensuring that everyone gets treated fairly. These are essential for His authority to function and for His blessings to come.

If we do not align ourselves with what is right in His sight and with justice, He will eventually intervene with judgment. Abraham Lincoln understood this, which is why he said that The Civil War was God’s judgment on both the North and the South. We had decades of the witness of how Great Britain had dealt with the same issues much more peacefully and effectively, but America hardened its heart and paid a dear price for it. We are still paying an unnecessarily high price for it.

The Destruction of the Black Family

The Willie Lynch letter, supposedly written in 1712, instructed plantation owners in Virginia how the Caribbean slave owners kept their slaves under control. That strategy was for the constant breakup of the slave families by selling members off. Some have contended that this letter was a hoax, but whether it is or not, the tactics were used by slave owners in America.

Since I was a child, I heard how many slave owners were benevolent to their slaves, some of them allowing their slaves to attend church or even illegally teaching them to read and write. Perhaps this is true, but no doubt, just as many were unimaginably ruthless and cruel. Simply owning human beings is cruel regardless of how well you treat them.

For the sake of understanding, take just a minute to consider how you would feel if you were a father or mother and had to go to bed every night not knowing if you, your spouse, or your children would be sold the next day and you would never see them again. How could spouses give their hearts to one another if they did not know that they would be together for another day? Then, as was a common practice, slaves were bred like animals for strength and endurance. How would you like to have your spouse loaned out to another plantation for breeding purposes?

It is now considered racism to just mention things like this, but we have to. This was real. If it wounds our sensitivities, just think of what it did to those who actually had to endure it? And we wonder why black families to this day still seem to be so devastated!

To digress just a minute more, if we pray for justice, but do not align ourselves with God’s justice, He may bring it in His own way—which is called the judgment of God. For example, we are told that the Lord will repay the oppressed. Scripture and history bear this out. When the Hebrew slaves were freed from Egypt, they took all of the gold and silver from Egypt with them. They took out of Egypt all of the pay that had been withheld



from them during their slavery. Could this be why the sons and daughters of slaves in America receive million dollar contracts to play a sport? This could well be, at least partly, because God is settling the accounts we did not take care of.

Affirmative Action had a lot of flaws and was poorly thought out and managed, as almost every such government program is. However, it was at least an attempt to correct some injustices committed against a people group in our nation. That being said, it is not likely that this program will continue much longer. However, it is a worthy cause for us to look for better and more effective ways to address this wound in our country until it is healed and there is a level playing field for everyone. This is basically righteousness and justice, which is the foundation of the Lord's throne and His kingdom.

Righteous Profiling

Profiling is something everyone does, admit it or not. It is not evil, but how we use it can be. It can also be used for good—a lot of good that we are now missing out on because we are so afraid to be judged as a racist because we profile.

I was once lamenting what a poor father I have probably been, and I started considering who I thought were the best fathers that I knew. My black friends made up only about 20% of my friends at the time, but they made up almost 90% of those I thought were probably the best fathers I knew. I was stunned by this realization. I then started thinking of some of the best mothers that I knew. They were mostly black too. Many of them were single moms who were making a supreme effort and sacrifice for their children and were raising children of rare character and ability.

Some tend to think of the stereotypical black single mom as a crack addict who basically lets her children raise themselves. That is an evil stereotype, and it's a lie. There are some of these, just as there are some white single moms like this. Even so, some of the greatest hero parents in our country today are single mothers, and there are far more of them than the crack addicts.

My point is that those of African heritage in America have a special gift for family. When the wounds afflicted upon this great tribe of people are healed, we are going to learn some important life issues from them. The sons and daughters of former slaves are ultimately going to teach us a lot about freedom, righteousness, and justice.

To judge righteously, and to no longer judge others after the flesh but after the spirit, we need to see others as they are called to be, not just as they were in the past or may even be presently. Knowing our history is crucial for understanding present realities, but it must be joined to prophetic vision. Can we see our country not just as it was, and not even as it is, but as it is called to be? Can we then determine practical steps to get there? To begin with, we cannot keep trying to close wounds or cover them up, without cleaning them and getting the infections out.



Summary

Now back to the Martin/Zimmerman tragedy and the great teaching moment that it is. Why do almost all blacks raised in the inner city believe that Zimmerman's innocent verdict is unjust and that O.J. was framed? That is the history they know. It has gotten better in the recent times, but for generations, blacks were constantly framed for crimes they did not commit and often lynched for them. Police are not seen as being in the inner city for protection as much as they are an enemy to be feared, not trusted.

I have had friends who were professional athletes that suddenly became wealthy but would agonize over whether they should buy a nice car or not. They knew how much more they would be pulled over by police who would automatically think that something was wrong with a black man or woman driving an expensive car. I have ridden in a car with Reggie White a few times and witnessed this. I saw how demeaning the cops would be until they recognized Reggie, and then they wanted his autograph. Once would be a curiosity, but when it happens over and over something is wrong.

There are some who use things like the Martin/Zimmerman tragedy as an opportunity. Some have made millions stoking the fires of racism, using threats or accusations of racism to shake down companies and even state and local governments. They are part of the infection that knows very well how to poke the unhealed wounds in the most painful way possible. It is not helpful when they are given the kind of attention and platform that our media and some communities give to them. They are good intimidators, and there are not many with the courage to stand up to them.

Even so, those who are profiting from poking the wounds are losing their standing, even if gradually. Pain is a friend that lets us know we have a problem. The pain that came from the Zimmerman verdict is an indication we still have some healing to do. We cannot let those who use controversy for profit dominate this time. Let's use it as a wake-up call that we still have work to do.

The God we seek to serve loves diversity so much that He made every snowflake different, every tree different, and even every leaf on every tree different. He made us all different. He made all the tribes and cultures in the earth different as a source of constant wonder and marvel. Being free of racism is more than just not thinking evil of those who are different, but it is celebrating and appreciating our differences.

One of the worst and most destructive deceptions of humanity is our tendency to judge others, and other people groups, by their most extreme elements. One way we can overcome this is by using the opportunity of an extreme situation to refuse to accept this as normal, but see it as the aberration or extreme that it is. Most conservatives are not at all the way most liberals may think they are, and most liberals are not the way most conservatives may think they are. This goes for religions, races, cultures, and individuals. Walking in truth demands that we not judge people by the flesh, but by the spirit.



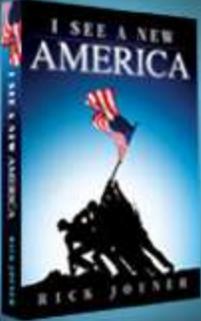
SPECIAL NOTE

There is much more to this subject than can be covered in a *Bulletin*. Rick has written books and booklets that address this and other issues in much more depth, such as ***A New America*** and ***Overcoming Racism***. Because of the timeliness of these issues, we are making both of these resources available at a 50% discount. You may order as many as you like at this rate. To order, just call our toll free number 1-800-542-0278 and have your credit card ready. Or, you may order them on our website at www.MorningStarMinistries.org. Be sure to use the promo code **Understanding50** when placing your order by phone or on our website in order to receive the 50% discount.

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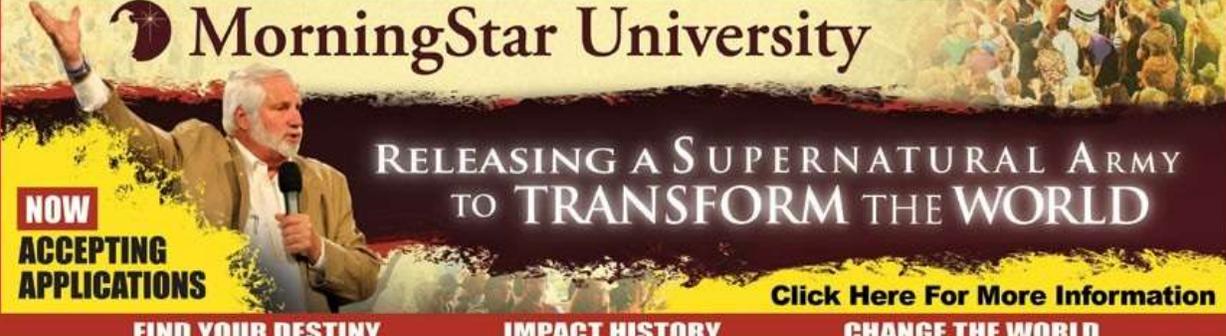
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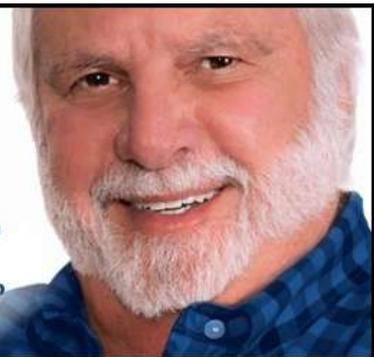
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