

# Resources

## Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation - Latasha Morrison

In an era where we seem to be increasingly divided along racial lines, many are hesitant to step into the gap, fearful of saying or doing the wrong thing. At times the silence, particularly within the church, seems deafening. But change begins with an honest conversation among a group of Christians willing to give a voice to unspoken hurts, hidden fears, and mounting tensions. These ongoing dialogues have formed the foundation of a global movement called Be the Bridge—a nonprofit organization whose goal is to equip the church to have a distinctive and transformative response to racism and racial division. In this perspective-shifting book, founder Latasha Morrison shows how you can participate in this incredible work and replicate it in your own community. With conviction and grace, she examines the historical complexities of racism. She expertly applies biblical principles, such as lamentation, confession, and forgiveness, to lay the framework for restoration. Along with prayers, discussion questions, and other resources to enhance group engagement, *Be the Bridge* presents a compelling vision of what it means for every follower of Jesus to become a bridge builder—committed to pursuing justice and racial unity in light of the gospel.

## Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice - Eric Mason

Dr. Eric Mason challenges the church in America: *Get up, sleeper, and rise up from the dead*. It's time to take a hard look at our history and stand together against the indignities and injustice in our world – to understand that justice is both theological and sociological – that there is no intimacy with God without justice in one's heart.

## Weep with Me: How Lament Opens a Door for Racial Reconciliation - Mark Vroegop

(You can read chapters for free at this site, <http://markvroegop.com/my-next-book-weep-with-me-how-lament-opens-a-door-for-racial-reconciliation/>)

Here are a few additional pieces from Pastor Vroegop that could be helpful:

[https://urldefense.com/v3/https://omny.fm/shows/thecommongood/guest-mark-vroegop-author-of-weep-with-me-how-lame-;!!HXCxUKcli0hFcdlZSrYmy4KH10yIKmil0U1HPWWfqZ37zVpOa6CgcGl6rhfo\\_sjquYlGdYAHn4\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://omny.fm/shows/thecommongood/guest-mark-vroegop-author-of-weep-with-me-how-lame-;!!HXCxUKcli0hFcdlZSrYmy4KH10yIKmil0U1HPWWfqZ37zVpOa6CgcGl6rhfo_sjquYlGdYAHn4$)

<https://www.9marks.org/pastors-talk/episode-132-on-teaching-your-church-about-issues-related-to-race-with-jeff-brown-james-miles-and-mark-vroegop/>

### The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism - Jemar Tisby

In August of 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, calling on all Americans to view others not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. Yet King included another powerful word, one that is often overlooked. Warning against the "tranquilizing drug of gradualism," King emphasized the fierce urgency of now, the need to resist the status quo and take immediate action. King's call to action, first issued over fifty years ago, is relevant for the church in America today. Churches remain racially segregated and are largely ineffective in addressing complex racial challenges. In *The Color of Compromise*, Jemar Tisby takes us back to the root of this injustice in the American church, highlighting the cultural and institutional tables we have to flip in order to bring about progress between black and white people. Tisby provides a unique survey of American Christianity's racial past, revealing the concrete and chilling ways people of faith have worked against racial justice. Understanding our racial history sets the stage for solutions, but until we understand the depth of the malady, we won't fully embrace the aggressive treatment it requires. Given the centuries of Christian compromise with bigotry, believers today must be prepared to tear down old structures and build up new ones. This book provides an in-depth diagnosis for a racially divided American church and suggests ways to foster a more equitable and inclusive environment among God's people.

This is the video option for the Color of Compromise:

<https://www.amazon.com/The-Color-of-Compromise/dp/B083ZMNSB2>

The Color of Compromise Video Study reveals chilling connections between the church and racism throughout American history. Jemar Tisby explores ways Christians have reinforced theories of racial superiority and inferiority and outlines the kind of bold action needed to forge a future of equality and justice. Please note some sessions contain graphic content that viewers may find disturbing.

### Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope - Esau McCaulley

Growing up in the American South, Esau McCaulley knew firsthand the ongoing struggle between despair and hope that marks the lives of some in the African American context. A key element in the fight for hope, he discovered, has long been the practice of Bible reading and interpretation that comes out of traditional Black churches. This ecclesial tradition is often disregarded or viewed with suspicion by much of the wider church and academy, but it has something vital to say. *Reading While Black* is a personal and scholarly testament to the power and hope of Black biblical interpretation. At a time in which some within the African American community are questioning the place of the Christian faith in the struggle for justice, New Testament scholar McCaulley argues that reading Scripture from the perspective of Black church

tradition is invaluable for connecting with a rich faith history and addressing the urgent issues of our times. He advocates for a model of interpretation that involves an ongoing conversation between the collective Black experience and the Bible, in which the particular questions coming out of Black communities are given pride of place and the Bible is given space to respond by affirming, challenging, and, at times, reshaping Black concerns. McCaulley demonstrates this model with studies on how Scripture speaks to topics often overlooked by white interpreters, such as ethnicity, political protest, policing, and slavery. Ultimately McCaulley calls the church to a dynamic theological engagement with Scripture, in which Christians of diverse backgrounds dialogue with their own social location as well as the cultures of others. *Reading While Black* moves the conversation forward.

[Breaking Down Walls: A Model for Reconciliation in an Age of Racial Strife - Glen Kehrein and Raleigh Washington](#)

See attached book review

[The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best – Irwin Ince, Timothy Keller \(forward\)](#)

See Pastor Keith's attachment

[Articles](#)

1619 Project - <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/09/opinion/nyt-1619-project-criticisms.html>

CRT - <https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/a-biblical-critique-of-secular-justice-and-critical-theory/>

Tim Keller addresses Critical Theory - <https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/a-biblical-critique-of-secular-justice-and-critical-theory/>

Intersectionality - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-christians-should-know-about-intersectionality/>

## ***Breaking Down Walls*** **Eight principles of race relations** **(a book review of *Breaking Down Walls*)**

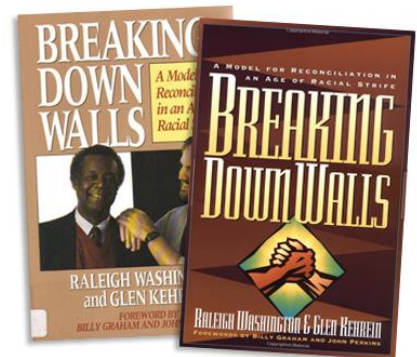
February 12, 2010 by Melanie Jongsma

<http://lifelinespublishing.com/8-principles-of-race-relations-part-1-a-book-review-of-breaking-down-walls/>

Rich, cross-cultural friendships are possible when certain principles are followed.

I'm pretty sure *Breaking Down Walls* is the most helpful book I've read so far about race relations, particularly between blacks and whites, though the tenets apply to all relationships and all cultures. I'm going to list and comment on the eight principles that authors Raleigh Washington and Glen Kehrein offer, but I hope you won't use this blog as a substitute for actually reading the book. You can get a copy on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for as little as a penny, so there's really no excuse not to buy copies for yourself and all your friends!

Same book, different covers. *Breaking Down Walls*, by Raleigh Washington and Glen Kehrein, was written soon after the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles. Its principles still apply today.



## 1. Commitment to Relationship

This principle is really a merger of two critical concepts: commitment and relationship. *Relationship* indicates a realization that meaningful cross-cultural connections require an ongoing investment of time, and you won't stick with it unless you are truly committed. Only in the context of committed relationships can true reconciliation happen.

**Application:** What can you do to put yourself in a situation that could lead to an opportunity to begin a cross-cultural friendship? Can you make a commitment to get to know someone specific at school, church, or work?

## 2. Intentionality

At my church, we call this being “intentionally inclusive,” and it’s one of our core values. There are several other churches in our area who have expressed an interest in being multi-cultural, but “interest” isn’t enough. Unless you make it a priority to seek out relationships with people who are different from you, they don’t happen. Or they don’t grow. Here’s a section that I marked in my copy of the book:



Intentionality acknowledges that race *is* an issue. John Perkins, the founder of numerous ministries committed to racial reconciliation and justice, says, “We are all damaged by the evil of racism which Satan uses to separate us.” The damage to blacks has resulted in feelings of inferiority; the damage to whites has promoted feelings of superiority. Intentionality says, “I recognize this damage. I recognize the hurt you have received. I not only don’t want to cause more hurt, but I want to make the extra effort to help heal the wounds.”

This cuts both ways. The hurt in the black community is historic, systemic, and crippling, but practically every white person who has tried to relate cross-culturally can identify individual hurts of being accused, rebuffed, or misunderstood by things black people have done or said.

If we’re not intentional about dealing with these hurts, if we say that all we have to do is act in Christian love and the problems will go away, we are engaging in denial, a mere scab covering a deep wound....

**Application:** What small, intentional step can you start with? Eating in an ethnic restaurant you haven’t tried before? Learning a phrase in a different language? Going to a different barber shop or nail salon? Attending the Race video/discussion series at Living Springs?

## 3. Sincerity

If we’re not honest about our feelings, our disagreements, our preferences, we will never really get to know each other, and we will never overcome the tensions that mark many of our interactions. Washington and Kehrein refer to the law of “WWB/BBW” — “Whites know how to talk to whites about blacks, and blacks know how to talk to blacks about whites.” Until we are as honest across ethnic lines as we are among “our own kind,” we can’t achieve reconciliation.

**Application:** When you are with people who look like you, and they make disparaging remarks about others, what can you say to indicate your new commitment to reconciliation?

## 4. Sensitivity

A lot of hurt is caused by people who just don’t think before they speak. The difficulty is, we usually don’t know we’re being hurtful until we’ve actually hurt someone. Sensitivity starts with a humble

awareness that not everyone is like you, that there are other ways of looking at the world that are just as valid as yours.

**Application:** Is there anyone you need to apologize to, for an assumption you've made based on skin color or accent?

## 5. Interdependence

After you've been hurt by someone, it's difficult to imagine reaching a point in your relationship where you would feel comfortable depending on that person. But only in confessing our need can we begin the journey to true wholeness. The truth is, we are incomplete without each other, personally and as God's Church. As *Breaking Down Walls* says, "Bringing like peoples together proves nothing about the power of the gospel, but when you bring dissimilar factions together in peace—Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, blacks and whites—you prove God's power."



**Application:** What needs do you have that you're willing to let someone from another culture meet?

## 6. Sacrifice

Let's face it, getting along with someone different from you means you're going to have to make some sacrifices. This is a big issue for churches who think they want to be multi-cultural, and then realize they may have to sacrifice some of their preferences in order to make other people feel welcome. Music, sermon style, length of service, expectations about who should serve in which ministries—all of these factors are influenced by cultural traditions, and all represent opportunities for either sacrifice or selfishness.

**Application:** If you have visited churches of other cultures, what did you like most? What made you most uncomfortable? What changes would you be willing to make in your own church to welcome someone whose cultural expectations are different?

## 7. Empowerment

"The black community is doing too much blaming, and the white community is doing too much denying," says Shelby Steele in his controversial collection of essays, *The Content of our Character*. Washington and Kehrein agree, and they submit that repentance and forgiveness are the "primary empowering agents" that free us from this blame-denial cycle. Their examples and stories remind me of an example I witnessed as part of "Breakfast Club." Now called "Common Ground," the program pairs people of different cultures and equips them to meet monthly for a year and develop a relationship that is enriched by their differences. For most of the year, the pairs meet on their own, but two or three times throughout the year, all the participants are invited to a large-group celebration gathering at which we share experiences and learn from each other.

At one such gathering, a young black woman told how she had shared with her partner, an older white woman, a story she remembered from her childhood. She had been shopping with her mother, and while her mother was checking out, this young woman, a small girl at the time, got a drink from the "white" drinking fountain. The white security guard saw her, yelled at her, and yanked her away from the fountain. He then yelled at her mother and forcibly escorted them from the store. The girl was

confused and frightened. She didn't understand why what she had done was so terrible, and she didn't understand why her mother accepted such an unfair punishment.

Now a grown woman, she was telling the story to her Breakfast Club partner. The pain, embarrassment, and anger of the experience came rushing back, and she began crying. Her partner, the older white woman, listened sympathetically, then touched the young woman's hand, looked into her eyes, and said, "I'm so sorry that happened to you." As the young woman explained to all of us at that large-group meeting, that simple apology made a life-changing difference.

"It was such a relief," she explained. "I didn't realize how much that long-ago experience had hurt me! But when my partner sincerely apologized like that, it validated all those feelings I had endured. I hadn't realized that all my life I had been letting those feelings define my relationships with white people. Even when a white person was nice to me, I assumed that they weren't sincere, that they were going to hurt me again. But that simple apology allowed me to forgive. It empowered me to move on freely."

**Application:** What do you need to repent of? Whom do you need to forgive?

## 8. Call

Kehrein and Washington contend that *all* Christians are called to the ministry of reconciliation ([2 Corinthians 5:17–18](#), NIV). It's not optional. Yes, some may be specifically called to make racial reconciliation a primary focus, but every Christian is expected to develop relationships with people who are not like us. That is the example Christ set for us when He became one of us and moved into our neighborhood.

**Application:**

- A) Which of the above four principles is most challenging for you?
- B) Are there any particular Bible verses you can think of that particularly apply to one principle or another?
- C) What is your next step in answering your call to be a reconciler? Before you answer that, read Part 3 of the book. The authors give separate advice to black Christians and white Christians because, they say, "The agenda for blacks and the agenda for whites differ somewhat, though the goal is the same."

# ***The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best***

By Irwyn Ince Jr.; Reviewed by Keith Sova

## **Summary**

Dr. Ince helps us to see how the community of the local church is rooted in and ought to reflect the Triune community of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Focusing on God's beauty, Ince shows how the unity-in-diversity that exists perfectly within the divine community fits perfectly with the church's historical reflections on the nature of beauty (because God is the source of all beauty). Quoting Herman Bavinck, he says, "The Trinity reveals God to us as the fullness of being, the true life, eternal beauty" (p. 37, quoted from *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:331)

Thus, for a community of human beings to reflect the beauty of God, it must reflect a unity-in-diversity. His core conviction, stated in introduction is, “The ministry of reconciliation demonstrated in the local church by the gathering of people from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities is the natural outworking of a rich biblical commitment” (p. 11). So, in essence, a local church is not fulfilling the entirety of its mission if it is not committed to pursuing reconciliation (unity) among people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds (diversity) within its community. As he goes on to say, “To refuse to pursue unity in diversity as a redeemed people is to fundamentally neglect what it means for us to be the image of God. The world should look at the church in amazement and wonder, ‘How did that happen? How did people with such differences come together and commit to staying together in spite of the difficulty?’” (p. 88).

However, he is also careful to note that this work of pursuing unity in diversity is not in vain because it is not dependent on our efforts. “As much as it feels like our ecclesial press toward beautiful community has us spinning our wheels, our hope isn’t based on our progress. It’s based on God’s promise” (p. 85).

Following the theological arguments, Ince gives several practical steps to encourage churches to pursue this kind of “beautiful community.” These practical steps begin with being “devoted to the doctrine.” The underpinning of this doctrine is a shared commitment to the Bible as our central authority (p. 112). Based on that, then, when he says that churches need to be “devoted to the doctrine,” he means “that churches need to embrace the theology of unity in diversity as a gospel imperative” (p. 112).

The next practical step he offers is for churches to “probe our preferences.” Citing various studies, Ince concludes that “In contemporary American society and the church, our preference for sameness is still very real” (p. 124). This means that our default setting is to connect with others who look like us, think like us, etc. This setting fails to pursue the unity-in-diversity that reflects God’s character, and thus must be re-examined. He says, “members of an in-group use the term *we* with the same essential significance. So, beautiful community is the crafting of a new *we*” (p. 126). In order to make our “*we*” focused on the Christian community alone, we must probe our preferences. We must ask ourselves, “Why do we do the things we do in the way that we do them?” (p. 128). We must also ask members of minority groups in our community, “What does it cost you to be here?” (p. 128). Having done that, we must count the cost of forsaking some of those preferences for the sake of the community. Ince says, “cultivating beautiful community is not cheap because it is also about discipleship. It will cost you preferences. To put it another way, you will, by necessity, have to die to self for the sake of extending grace to your diverse neighbors” (p. 133).

Despite the inevitable challenges, Ince leaves us on a hopeful note: “We celebrate the fact that the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who exists in eternal beauty and glory, refused to turn his eyes away from the darkness of the world. So, the Son left his beautiful communion to take on our fragility, weakness, and vulnerability so that he could restore us to communion with God and each other. And our great joy is that in our pursuit of beautiful community, we are participating in the beautiful plan and purpose of our beautiful God” (p. 151)

## **Review**

Having read just a few books on the subject of racial reconciliation, I have found this one to be the most theologically rich. All of the books make note of key doctrines—the imago Dei, the sixth commandment, the nature of reconciliation—but this one goes deeper into God’s own nature and character. It seems generally true that there is no more difficult doctrine to grasp in Christian theology than the doctrine of God, and Ince does a great job of helping us understand who He is and how we should reflect His character. I once heard a pastor say, “in order to feel deeply, you have to think deeply.” That has been true of this book.

There are many other significant strengths to this book. He has a winsome tone. His writing is easy to follow. He is very well read. On the one hand, his main theological influences seem to include Herman Bavinck, John Frame, Abraham Kuyper, John Calvin, and Thomas Aquinas. This gives his argument added weight as he draws deeply on solid Christian tradition. On the other hand, he interacts adeptly with contemporary social scientists from across the spectrum, including Ibram X. Kendi (a noted proponent of critical race theory).

There are a couple of things that could be considered drawbacks. One is that he is *very* Presbyterian. Aside from following a fairly narrow Reformed theological tradition, one passage that might be particularly challenging for our people is when he makes a distinction between Great Commission Christianity and Cosmic Redemptive Christianity (p. 84). Citing Dr. Anthony Bradley (theologian-in-residence at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in NYC), he says that,

in Great Commission Christianity, the gospel is ‘the announcement of the good news of Jesus’ work to restore image-bearers to the rightful worship of God.’ This, [Bradley] claims, is not a wrong view, but a limited one. ‘Its hyper-focus on saving individuals and the work of the church says nothing about the redemption of creation, which God is also reconciling to himself through Christ.’ Cosmic Redemptive Christianity, on the other hand, understands the gospel this way: ‘Through the person and work of Jesus Christ, God fully accomplishes salvation for us, rescuing us from judgment for sin into fellowship with him, and then restores the creation in which we can enjoy our new life together with him forever.’ What appears to be a subtle difference has significant implications. He points out that Great Commission Christianity has no need to engage social justice issues since it doesn’t preach a redemption that considers all of creation primary. (p. 84)

Dr. Bradley has been especially critical of evangelicals, favoring the more confessional Reformed tradition (Swiss, Dutch, Scottish Presbyterian). His main arguments have to do with the fact that white evangelicals, by rejecting any kind of formal confessional tradition, have a long history of turning a blind eye to social injustice (even to the point of being complicit in perpetuating it), even when many of these injustices have impacted their brothers and sisters in Christ. This would obviously be a controversial argument among many of our people, but one that would hopefully spark meaningful self-reflection rather than instinctual defensiveness.

## **Conclusion**

I think this would be an excellent book for us to read as a congregation. It would challenge our people theologically. I think it would give our people a framework of unity through which to view racial reconciliation. It covers the topic from a broad enough perspective that it could encompass any number of practical steps that we might want to come up with in response.