

**JACKSONVILLE STATEMENT ON GOSPEL UNITY
RACIAL RECONCILIATION & THE JACKSONVILLE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION**

“Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to live worthy of the calling you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope at your calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

- Ephesians 4:1-6 (CSB) -

Preamble

As evangelical Christians we acknowledge the reality that division and disunity are tools of the Enemy against the proliferation and spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whether in families, local church bodies, neighboring churches, or even denominational entities, division has unfortunately been far too normative throughout church history.

Race, as commonly defined, refers to the various ethnicities, skin colors, and cultural heritages of human beings. As evangelical Christians, we acknowledge the sinful divides among those of differing races that, at times, have been ignored or worse, excused within the church.

Reconciliation refers to the acknowledgement of human brokenness and the need for restoration to God through Jesus Christ (*Colossians 1:20-23*). In that he has reconciled humanity to himself, Christians are to be reconciled one to another, as children of God (*2 Corinthians 5:18*).

Great strides toward reconciliation occurred in the United States throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Yet, many continue to experience great division and painful separation due to ethnicity, cultural heritage, and/or race. While acknowledging much has been done to reconcile over recent decades, it is clear we have far to go.

Racial reconciliation for Christians is not solely, or even primarily, a political issue. Racial reconciliation for Christians is not merely a social justice issue. Racial reconciliation for Christians is not a public relations issue. Racial division is a sin issue. Therefore, racial reconciliation for Christians is a gospel unity issue.

To ignore sin is to affirm sin. Therefore, the pastors and leaders serving together in local churches and denominational entities have deemed it right, timely, and proper to present a clear, concise, biblically-founded, gospel-centered statement on gospel unity and racial reconciliation.

We believe that God has created all humanity in His image, male and female, with diverse skin tones and ethnic histories. As image-bearers we exist for the glory of God knowing that brings us the greatest good. We believe that salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone and that he died so that all may be saved (*John 3:16*). This offer is for all people. Believing we need clarity on the issues of unity and racial reconciliation among believers, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that racial reconciliation is a gospel issue.

WE DENY that racial reconciliation is solely a social issue.

Matthew 15:21-28; Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 2:11-14; Ephesians 1:9-10, 13; 2:1-10, 13, 14-22; 3:3-5

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that the gospel alone offers hope and celebrates what the world fears.¹

WE DENY that anything other than God and the full message of the gospel provide the hope and answers needed for humanity.

Psalm 28:7; 46:2-3; Lamentations 3:18; Matthew 12:21; Romans 8:24-25; 12:12; 1 Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:5; Hebrews 11:1, 7; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Peter 1:3, 1 John 3:3

Article 3

WE AFFIRM the biblical teaching of race references the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish peoples.

WE DENY the definition of race that creates a racial hierarchy based on inferred biological inferiority.

Leviticus 19:34; Acts 8:26-40; Romans 10:12; Ephesians 2:11-3:8; 1 Corinthians 12:13

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that Scripture teaches that Canaan was cursed by Noah due to his son Ham's actions and that Cain was marked by God following the murder of his brother Abel.

WE DENY the curse of Canaan, often called the "Curse of Ham" and the mark of Cain, wrongly defined as a change of his skin color, refers to racial superiority or inferiority or has anything to do with differing skin tones of people.

Genesis 4:15; 9:20-25; 10:6

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that gospel-centered racial reconciliation is a pursuit of love for others flowing from Holy Spirit-empowered obedience of those who repent, believe in the cross and resurrection of Jesus by faith, and are justified by faith in Christ.²

WE DENY that ethnic diversity is synonymous with gospel-centered racial reconciliation.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19; Matthew 25; John 13:34; Acts 10:34-35; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 4:32; James 2:8

¹ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "The Root Cause of the Stain of Racism in the Southern Baptist Convention" in *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention*, eds. Kevin M. Jones and Jarvis J. Williams (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2017), 5.

² Jarvis J. Williams, "Biblical Steps Toward Removing the Stains of Racism in the Southern Baptist Convention" in *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention*, eds. Kevin M. Jones and Jarvis J. Williams (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2017), 30.

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, lifelong union between one man and one woman, regardless of race or ethnicity, for His glory, signifying the covenant love between Christ and His church.

WE DENY that marriage between a man and woman from differing racial or ethnic backgrounds to be sinful.

Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19:6; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:22-23; 28-29; 31

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that pastors are uniquely called and positioned to shepherd their people toward gospel-centered racial reconciliation understanding that diversity is actually at the heart of the gospel.³

WE DENY that racial reconciliation can be forced upon others through human means.

John 21:15-17; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-2

Article 8

WE AFFIRM the resolutions approved at Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings repenting of the sins of racism, most notably slave-holding, of past generations, and the need for continued work toward gospel-centered racial and ethnic unity.

WE DENY that the sins of past generations can be ignored and need not be acknowledged.

Nehemiah 9:1-2; Jeremiah 6:16; Daniel 9:16

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that all human beings are image bearers of God.

WE DENY the validity, truthfulness, and right standing of any and all organizations, groups, or individuals claiming racial superiority of any kind.

Genesis 1:26-27; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:15; James 3:9; 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 7:9

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that unity in our churches must be founded in Christ alone.

WE DENY that unity in our churches can be founded in political ideologies or national identity.

Psalms 20:7; 133:1; Daniel 2:21; Matthew 6:33; Romans 8:28; 13:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 2:13-15; Jude 3; Revelation 7:9-12

³ Jamaal Williams, "Intentionally Cultivating Multicultural Churches," *Light Magazine*, Winter 2016, 27.