

LEGGIT



Searching
Biblical
for Strategies
to Bring Us
Together

Inside: Sample of new *Lifelight* (center) plus Racial Reconciliation resources (pp. 14-15)

Reclaiming the Higher Ground on Marriage

BY RICHARD D. LAND

There is irrefutable sociological evidence that proves that when marriages fail, families are weakened; and when families are weakened, society as a whole feels the impact. Christians need to recognize their divine importance in God's grand design for humanity and recommit themselves to building strong marriages, strengthening weak ones, and restoring broken ones. On the heels of its primary responsibility to reach the entire world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the church's next most critical contribution to society is its responsibility to lay a foundation for the building of strong marriages.



Our nation is threatened by a high divorce rate, a rise in cohabitation, an increase in out-of-wedlock births, a decline in the marriage rate, and a diminishing interest and readiness in marrying, especially among young people. With three-quarters of marriages performed by clergy, churches are uniquely positioned not only to call America to a stronger commitment to this holy union but also to provide practical ministries and influence in reversing the course of our culture.

The institution of marriage—the covenantal union of a man and woman—has served for all of history as the bedrock of society. The marriage of one man and one woman is the fount out of which flow the critical values that sustain and benefit societies. There is irrefutable sociological evidence that proves that when marriages fail, families are weakened; and when families are weakened, society as a whole feels the impact.* It was not happenstance that the first institution established by God was marriage.

God ordained three institutions in human society to enable individuals to fulfill their God-given purposes: marriage (the family), the church, and civil government. Each of these institutions is indispensable in our society, and each makes certain unique contributions to society. If any of these institutions are impaired, society will suffer in some very specific ways. If the church is undermined, people will have a reduced opportunity to hear the counsel of God; if the government is undermined, the people are not protected from predatory evil; and if the institution of marriage is undermined, families suffer, with the weakest and most defenseless among us—the children—suffering the most grievously. If any of these three institutions seek to dominate the legitimate sphere of the other, or surrenders its proper sphere of influence, society's very foundations are imperiled.

The family is a particularly important institution. A family established on the marriage between a man and a woman provides for the cultivation of vital personal attributes—compassion, cooperation, and commitment—in ways that other relationships do not. Sadly, many marriages in our day fail in significant ways to

develop and model these characteristics among husbands, wives, or children. By their very nature, broken marriages and counterfeit alternative relationships such as cohabitation and same-sex unions fail to impact and benefit society in the manifold ways that society is blessed by intact, committed heterosexual marriages.

Across the board, Southern Baptists agree on the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman. For example, a document recently adopted by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's Coordinating Council affirmed that the "foundation of a Christian sexual ethic is faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman and celibacy in singleness." The statement went on to say that the CBF, as the SBC from which it split, "does not allow for the expenditure of funds for organizations or causes that condone, advocate, or affirm homosexual practice," and further delineated the fact that the Fellowship does not allow for the hiring of a staff person or missionary who is "a practicing homosexual." Southern Baptists may disagree on some issues, but when it comes to marriage as a divine institution between a man and a woman and *only* between a man and a woman, there is no disagreement.

While marriages between men and women are the primary source of society's bedrock values, this critically important institution is under a mighty assault today. Divorce, substance abuse, domestic violence, negligence in fulfilling family responsibilities, and a myriad of other failings occur too often in marriages. Such failings occur with equal frequency among churchgoers and non-churchgoers.

Consequently, in our day the very foundation of society is

threatened. For without the purest forms of compassion, mercy, cooperation, commitment, and sacrifice flowing out of strong heterosexual marriages, there are seriously reduced prospects for the endurance and expansion of a just and civil society.

Given this bleak prospect, it is imperative that churches redouble their efforts to encourage strong marriages. As the guardian and teacher of God's truth, churches are the place where the secular and the spiritual meet. In His perfect wisdom, God has ordained the *ecclesia*, His called-out people, to teach His truth to the entire world and to model those values that honor Him. If the churches fail in either of these responsibilities, society will suffer.

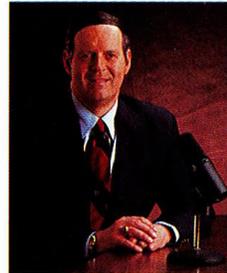
When Southern Baptists revised their confession of faith in 1963, 83 percent of America's children were being reared in intact families. According to the U.S. Census, the non-marital birth rate has gone up by 223.6 percent between 1970 and 1998. Between 1970 and 1998, the number of single-parent families has increased by 190.2 percent, and the number of children living with unmarried couples went up by 665 percent.

Unquestionably these are statistically and socially significant figures. The myth that divorce is not all that harmful to children—at worst only a temporary episode—has now been demonstrably refuted. In recognition of the need for remedial education on the sanctity of marriage in our faith communities, Southern Baptists adopted the article on The Family to the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1998. We believe that marriage is a divine institution and that if there is a solution to be offered to address the instability within the institution of marriage in a new

millennium, it must come from the faith community.

Southern Baptist initiatives such as True Love Waits, the Covenant Marriage Movement, and Fall Festivals of Marriage are helpful acknowledgments that there is a real crisis in the institution of marriage today. We need to do a much better job of helping to instruct those in the faith communities on their responsibilities as they pertain to God's design for marriage.

Christians need to recognize their divine importance in God's grand design for humanity and recommit themselves to building strong marriages, strengthening weak ones, and restoring broken ones. On the heels of its primary responsibility to reach the entire world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the church's next most critical contribution to society is its responsibility to lay a foundation for the building of strong marriages. It is my prayer that God would equip and empower us by His Holy Spirit to be instruments that encourage rock-solid marriages built on the foundation of the Solid Rock—the Lord Jesus Christ. ☩



Richard D. Land is President of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and host of the nationally syndicated daily radio broadcast, *For Faith & Family*. He joined with other religious leaders recently in calling on churches across the U.S. "to deepen [their] commitment to marriage," as they signed "A Biblical Declaration on Marriage" in Washington, D.C. For more information on the document, visit our website at www.erlc.com.



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* Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage* (New York: Doubleday, 2000); Judith S. Wallerstein, Julie Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion, 2000); Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The Divorce Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

Vows Revisited

KEEPING THE MARRIAGE COVENANT FRESH

BY DENNIS AND BARBARA RAINEY

In the summer of 1997, I was sitting at my computer writing an article, praying, and asking myself, How can we rebuild the family in America?

I felt the weight of this question not just because I'm involved with FamilyLife and have devoted much of my adult life to researching, writing, and speaking on how to build strong marriages and families. More important, I wanted new insight because our oldest daughter's marriage was only days away. Was there something I could say or do that would help Ashley and Michael begin a marriage that would go the distance?

God brought to my mind the concept of covenant, which literally means "to cut." In the Old Testament they split an animal in half and laid the two sides on the ground. The two people making a covenant then walked through those bloody pieces and pledged, "May God

do also to me if I break my covenant with you!"

I knew that hacking a steer in half during my daughter's wedding wouldn't cut it, but I thought, How can we incorporate covenant? I had an inspiration. We took Ashley and Michael's vows to a calligrapher who inscribed them on a sheet of pure cotton paper.

During their wedding ceremony, after stating their vows verbally, the couple turned and signed their marriage covenant. There was space at the bottom of the covenant for others to sign, and the pastor asked if anyone in the audience wanted to witness the marriage covenant. By doing so, people would pledge to pray for Michael and Ashley and promise to hold them accountable for keeping their covenant. A line formed quickly.

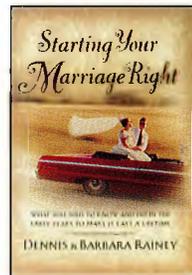
In the life of our family at least, that marked the return of the marriage covenant.

Starting Your Marriage Right

The early years of marriage . . . a blissful time when everything seems right in the world . . . a time of learning and growing together and surviving on love and an occasional peanut butter and jelly sandwich. And then you, the creamy connoisseur, discover he likes crunchy and has spent the last five dollars you have on "his" food. Suddenly, that perfect someone is surprisingly flawed . . . and that's just the beginning. The honeymoon's over!

In *Starting Your Marriage Right*, Dennis and Barbara Rainey present a view of the early years of marriage that is upbeat and optimistic without glossing over very real potential problems. Amid the 52 "lessons," couples learn how to better communicate, meet each other's needs, and keep God as the center of their relationship. *Starting Your Marriage Right* offers concrete ways to put these and other important principles into practice so you and your spouse can build a solid foundation for your marriage.

Thomas Nelson Publishers, ISBN 0-7852-6803-0



The Covenant Marriage Movement is a growing coalition of national organizations whose unifying goal is "To restore churches and society to an understanding and practice of marriage as covenant by applying the timeless principles of God's Word." These groups challenge millions of Americans to sign a Covenant Marriage Statement to declare their individual marriages as lasting institutions in the face of rampant divorce and the ensuing breakdown of the family. For more information on the Covenant Marriage Movement, visit www.familyfi.org/CMM.htm, call 1-800-268-1343, or e-mail covenantmarriage@lifeway.com.



WHY IS THE MARRIAGE COVENANT IMPORTANT?

Our God is a Covenant Maker and Keeper. The Bible is filled with the covenant idea because God chose covenant as His way of relating to people. The covenant is the most sacred of all pledges and promises.

The first marriage covenant was achieved when God united Adam and Eve in the first wedding. Later Jesus expressed the importance of the marriage covenant when He said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and

said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?'"

Then Jesus added, "Consequently they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt. 19:4-6).

The covenant Jesus described was a solemn oath made by the two partners to each other and also to God. In contemporary marriage ceremonies, words and symbols hint at covenant through

the stating of vows and the exchanging of rings. But the marriage license is more like a contract than a covenant.

A contract has an end date. A covenant is permanent. A contract usually specifies a part of a person's property or services. A covenant involves a person's total being, which in marriage means a commitment that extends beyond performance, health issues, and financial prosperity.

I will never forget some of the best premarriage counseling that Barbara and I received. A good friend, Don

Meredith, looked me in the eyes and said, "Dennis, will you still be committed to Barbara if she someday commits adultery?"

And then Don looked Barbara in the eyes and said, "Will you remain committed to Dennis if he becomes an adulterer?" That may have seemed a stunning question to ask a couple who were still dating and only considering marriage, but the sober question matches the serious nature of the marriage covenant—a promise to never sever the marital bond.

This article is excerpted and reprinted with permission from Starting Your Marriage Right, copyright ©2000 by Dennis and Barbara Rainey, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tenn., ISBN 0-7852-6803-0.

FIVE STEPS FOR A COVENANT MARRIAGE

Since most of us were married in a ceremony that did not emphasize the marriage covenant, here are five ideas that will make a covenantal commitment a reality in your marriage:

1. Pray together every day as a couple.

When Barbara and I were first married, I asked a man I highly respected for his best counsel on marriage. He told me that Barbara and I should pray together every day. My friend Carl said, "I've prayed every day with my Sara Jo for more than twenty-five years. Nothing has built our marriage more than our prayer time together." Our obedience to this spiritual discipline has reminded us of who really is the Source of strength in our marriage.

2. Never use the D word.

Marriage is tough, and at times every one of us probably has thought about giving up. The key word is thought. No matter how hopeless the situation seems or how lousy you feel, I urge you not to say the D word—divorce—in your home.

3. Sign a marriage covenant.

Whether you are newlyweds or you have been married awhile, why not consider having a covenant-signing ceremony? You could do this with other couples at your church or in your home with the witnesses being family members or close friends. After the covenant signing, hang the document in a prominent spot.

4. Do what you promised.

It won't ultimately make any difference if you sign a piece of paper but later break your covenant. The famous British pastor Charles Spurgeon said, "It was by perseverance that the snail reached the ark." Don't let temptations and heartaches keep you from finishing strong in your marriage and family.

5. Urge others to keep their covenant.

In the Christian community we need to band together to fight divorce. We serve a God who has gone on record on this topic: "I hate divorce" (Mal. 2:16). We need to combat divorce in the most positive way—by honoring our covenants and encouraging others to do the same. Together we can become known in our culture as the keepers and protectors of the marriage covenant.

TO TAKE ACTION TOGETHER:

Would you like to make a covenant a part of your marriage? For creative ideas on this event for you or your church or to order a printed covenant suitable for signing and framing, contact FamilyLife at 1-800-FLTODAY or www.familylife.com.

HOME BUILDERS PRINCIPLE:

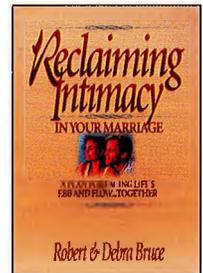
The wise couple builds their relationship on the solid foundation of a marriage covenant.

Steps to Developing a Best Friendship with Your Spouse

SEEKING A DEEPER FRIENDSHIP AND A MORE INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

Life demands much in today's fast-paced society, from high stress jobs to coaching the kids' baseball team to tight finances. And these demands can wear even the strongest of individuals to total exhaustion and eventually to ask themselves: Where does married life fit in, and when do we have time for each other?

Intimacy in marriage is not something that simply magically appears. It is not an overnight sensation, nor is it found in only the most spiritual of couples. Robert and Debra Bruce extend a helping hand in their book *Reclaiming Intimacy In Your Marriage* by offering a step-by-step, realistic program to strengthen the emotional, practical, and spiritual bonds that make your marriage unbreakable. This eight-week journey gives practical ways to reorganize your life, reclaim time with your spouse, and break down barriers to intimacy.



Bethany House Publishers
ISBN 1-55661-807-7

1 Celebrate your differences.

You're neat; he's not.
He's a hugger;

you're not. Intimate marriages are the merging of two very different partners.



2 Make time to be together.

Relationships do not grow or remain stimulating without conscious effort; we must take time to enrich our lives, and therefore our love, or we are merely coexisting.



3 Observe your behavior.

Learn to step outside yourself in your marriage by focusing on how your partner perceives you.



4 Treat your spouse as your best friend.

The best way to have a friend is to be a friend. This saying applies to married couples as well as to friendships outside of marriage.



5 Stop destructive criticism.

As we focus on the gospel challenge of agape love in our marriages, we need to focus on finding remedies for problems rather than dwelling on who is at fault.



"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

LUKE 6:37 NIV

6 Forgive and forget.

We all make mistakes in our lives; no one is innocent of this. A true friend is able to forgive the other and move on to a closer relationship.



7 Be supportive.

Stand up for your partner. A true friend is loyal and takes risks in supporting the other.



FOR FURTHER READING, SEE:

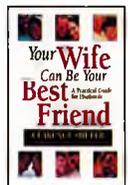
Married Lovers, Married Friends

Blending Scripture, humor, and candid personal experiences, Steve and Annie Chapman offer down-to-earth steps to ensure that your marriage can be continually remade with God's ever-present help. (Bethany House Publishers, ISBN 0-7642-2226-0)



Your Wife Can Be Your Best Friend

In *Your Wife Can Be Your Best Friend*, Clarence Shuler tells men how to apply and practice principles that will help their wives be their best friends. Areas covered include fighting fair, effective communication, encouraging words, spiritual leadership, empowered parenting, and more. (Moody Press, ISBN 0-8024-3188-7)



MEETING YOUR SPOUSE'S LOVE NEEDS — IT MAY NOT BE WHAT YOU THINK

In a covenant marriage relationship God desires that we fulfill each other, Gary Rosberg told *For Faith & Family* host, Richard Land. We need to realize it is a marriage of three, Gary continued, noting that when a husband and wife try to get their needs met by their partner with no concern for their spouse's needs, they miss God's design.

"When a husband and wife truly begin to understand spiritual intimacy and understand that a vertical relationship with Christ is important in their marriage, they are able to love their spouse out of the overflow of their heart," Gary said on a recent *For Faith & Family* radio program (www.faithandfamily.com).

"The underlying foundation for us all — men and women alike — is a sense of honor," added Barbara, his wife and ministry partner. "When we took our vows we promised to love, to honor, and to cherish each other. We need to call American couples back to that vow that we took not only before our mates but also before God."

What are your spouse's love needs?

Something in us assumes that if we treat our spouse the way we would like him or her to treat us, we are meeting our partner's needs. But when it comes to needs, the Golden Rule does not always apply. Why? Because often a husband's needs are different from a wife's needs. To help us understand the unique love needs of husbands and wives, we surveyed more than 700 couples. We presented them with a list of twenty needs and asked them to rank, in order of importance, what they needed from their spouse. The top five responses are:

HUSBANDS' TOP FIVE LOVE NEEDS

1. Unconditional Love and Acceptance
2. Sexual Intimacy
3. Companionship
4. Encouragement and Affirmation
5. Spiritual Intimacy

WIVES' TOP FIVE LOVE NEEDS

1. Unconditional Love and Acceptance
2. Emotional Intimacy and Communication
3. Spiritual Intimacy
4. Encouragement and Affirmation
5. Companionship

How do these love needs align with your own? Do any of these needs surprise you? Does the order of priority surprise you?

Why is it important to meet your spouse's love needs?

Meeting your spouse's love needs is one of the most important responsibilities you have in your marriage . . . for several reasons.

Meeting your spouse's love needs is a matter of keeping your vows. When you got married, you promised to love your husband, to cherish your wife, to face the good and the bad hand in hand, together, as one. When you meet the needs of your spouse, you are fulfilling your marriage vows.

Meeting your spouse's love needs is what God calls you to do. Some of the New Testament's most powerful words about marriage call husbands and wives to a sacrificial love that makes them willing to lay down their lives for each other. God wants husbands and wives to consider the needs of the other as more important than your own.



"Some people will just celebrate the number of years they have been married. We want them to celebrate the health and the spiritual connectiveness as well as the intimacy and the integrity of their marriage. It is important that they not only finish well — that they cross the finish line together — but they cross the finish line honoring Jesus Christ, being a light so a dark world can see. That is our passion."

Gary Rosberg on For Faith & Family on why it is critical that couples understand the unique "love needs" of their spouse



Meeting your spouse's love needs will result in a great marriage. When you meet the love needs of your spouse, you build the foundation for a great marriage. When you focus on how to meet your spouse's needs, you become motivated to do what God calls you to do.

Neglecting to meet your spouse's love needs could cost you your marriage. Perhaps the bottom-line reason for meeting your spouse's needs is that if you don't, you could end up losing him or her to another man or woman . . . or to whatever "affair" your spouse believes will fill that need in his or her heart. You would never think of not meeting your spouse's need for food and water; it's obvious that he or she would die without these essentials. Yet your spouse's emotional, physical, relational, and spiritual needs are so vital, so critical, that if they are not met, your marriage will begin to die. It's that simple. When you meet the needs of your husband or wife, you guard your marriage against temptation. ❏

Portions of this article are excerpted from:



The Five Love Needs of Men and Women

Taking the adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" to lofty heights, Dr. Gary and Barbara Rosberg attack marital miscommunication and lead readers into a better understanding of what their spouse needs and how to meet those needs.

Tyndale House Publishers
ISBN 0-8423-4994-4

BY CLARENCE SHULER

In an earlier article on this subject, I noted that most Christians — no matter their ethnicity or race — do not know what they are missing given their lack of association or healthy, long-term relationships with persons from a different race or culture. In fact, the body of Christ can't produce God's best until such unity exists in the midst of the diversity He created.

But perhaps we have the cart before the horse. We need to understand exactly what the Bible is saying regarding the oft-used term "racial reconciliation." It is important to note that we can't fully understand what reconciling persons of different races or ethnicities entails until we ourselves are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

Racism is a sin problem. It is a functional denial of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are seeking reconciliation because we have been reconciled in Christ Jesus—that empowers us and impels us to seek reconciliation with others.

RICHARD LAND, ERLC PRESIDENT


View "bulletin inserts" in a whole new light!

Introducing *LifeLight*, the ERLC's answer to the growing demand by Southern Baptists for fresh insights on cultural issues of our day. The new four-page format includes commentary written in layman's terms, biblical application, statistics, prayer and action points, and steps to becoming a Christian. The full-color *LifeLight* is undated for use when addressing the issue of race throughout the year.



A sample of the new *LifeLight* on racial reconciliation is included in the center of this publication. Though not actual size, the sample accurately reflects the content of this invaluable resource. To order a supply for your church to distribute during the worship service and/or to place in foyers and prayer rooms, see the product description and order form on pages 14-15.

IS RACIAL RECONCILIATION BIBLICAL?

Let's attempt to define the term "racial reconciliation." In the word *reconciliation*, the prefix "re-" implies a previous good relationship. Thus, the word *reconciliation* carries the idea of being restored to an earlier, more harmonious relationship.

In examining spiritual reconciliation, God and man started out in a perfect relationship. Man sinned, separating him from God. God's grace, mercy, and love provided the perfect atonement for mankind's sin in the person of Jesus Christ. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, we can be in fellowship with God again. Basically, there was a good relationship that was damaged and now has been restored for those who embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Second Corinthians 5:11-21 is often used as a proof text for the term "racial reconciliation." At its heart this text portrays biblical or spiritual reconciliation, i.e., the process whereby man is brought back into fellowship with God. It is first about sin and salvation. Most Bible scholars consider verse 11 of this chapter an appropriate break in this text. It says, "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men." The question is, persuade men to do what? The context demands we answer: Accept Christ as Savior.

Verses 14 and 15 state, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." These verses are clearly talking about Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. We can make practical application of these verses by saying that "God's love should compel us to love all people," but the point of these verses is that Christians are compelled by God's love to witness about

"Racial and ethnic reconciliation apa



When I Reconciliat ONLY WHEN IT IS

Him in regards to salvation. Verses 16 and 17 speak about a spiritual transformation; verse 18 is about God's salvation. Thus, the ministry of reconciliation mentioned in verse 18 is not simply a reference to making a friend of a different culture or race, but a reference to the ministry of sharing the Gospel with non-believers. Yet the embedded truth is that God is no respecter of skin color, and neither should we be. Simply put, when we are the beneficiaries of God's love — in that Christ died and was resurrected for our sakes — how then can we continue to show others contempt and hatred? We are compelled to show them Jesus.

Similarly, several verses in Ephesians 2 are cited as explanatory passages for the concept of "racial reconciliation." Ephesians 2:15b says, "His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace." This new man is a melting pot. This biblical passage says that the Jews and the Gentiles were to voluntarily give up or sacrifice some of their distinctions in order to become this new man. Ephesians 2:16, which reads, "And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility," speaks of reconciling Jews and Gentiles to God through the

A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE RACE ISSUE

BY BEN LANG



Ben Lang is a former campus minister who is Pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church (Lithia Springs, Ga.) and African-American Consultant for New Church Development of the Baptist State Convention of Georgia.

As we enter a new millennium—400 years after the first Africans came to North America and 45 years after the Montgomery bus boycott—we are still preoccupied with the issue of race. Race-based thinking continues to affect our laws, policies, politics, and even our religious beliefs and social behavior. It is essential that we, the body of Christ, begin to see ourselves as a stew pot in which each ingredient is changed and flavored by the others. We must find biblical answers that will remove the infections of racial prejudices that continue to divide the body of Christ's church.

The Problem? Sin, Not Skin!

In Ephesians 6:12, Paul reminds us that our struggle is not one of flesh and blood but is one of spiritual warfare. Racism at its core is a spiritual problem, namely sin. The problem is sin, not skin. Racism is a form of sinful pride that alleges that one race is better than another. It is primarily linked with the power to control, and it exists when one group refuses to share power and resources with another group. It exists when an individual or group in power maintains

inflexible individual or institutional practices and policies, justifying unrighteous actions by blaming the victims, who are mastered on the basis of their skin color.

Racism is sin for at least three reasons.

RACISM CALLS GOD AS CREATOR INTO QUESTION.

The Bible declares God to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth. After He created mankind, the Scriptures declare that everything was good and very good. If we believe the Bible to be true, and it is, then we must believe that God made us all in His image as the Bible states (Gen. 1:1, 26-27, 31; 2:7). Now, if we are going to believe in creationism over evolution, then let's believe that God made all of creation "good and very good," even the different races. Why do we place a question mark where God has placed a period?

RACISM IS A FORM OF IDOLATRY.

Burning with the coals of apathy and insensitivity, it is a distortion of the Creator's illustrious "multi-colored" and "multi-ethnic" design. It is a perversion of God's intent that there be a variety of faces. It is an idolatrous self-worship that violates the commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:1-6).

RACISM OPPOSES THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

Racism is incompatible with the person and work of Christ. The message of the Gospel of Christ is that of love and a new creation. When we allow racism to dominate our attitudes and actions, then we are saying to a lost world that we do not know the living Christ (2 Cor. 5:16-21). Racism is a diabolical plot of Satan (our real enemy) to hinder the message of the Gospel and the advancement of God's Kingdom. The Scriptures declare that Jesus came to "destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8).

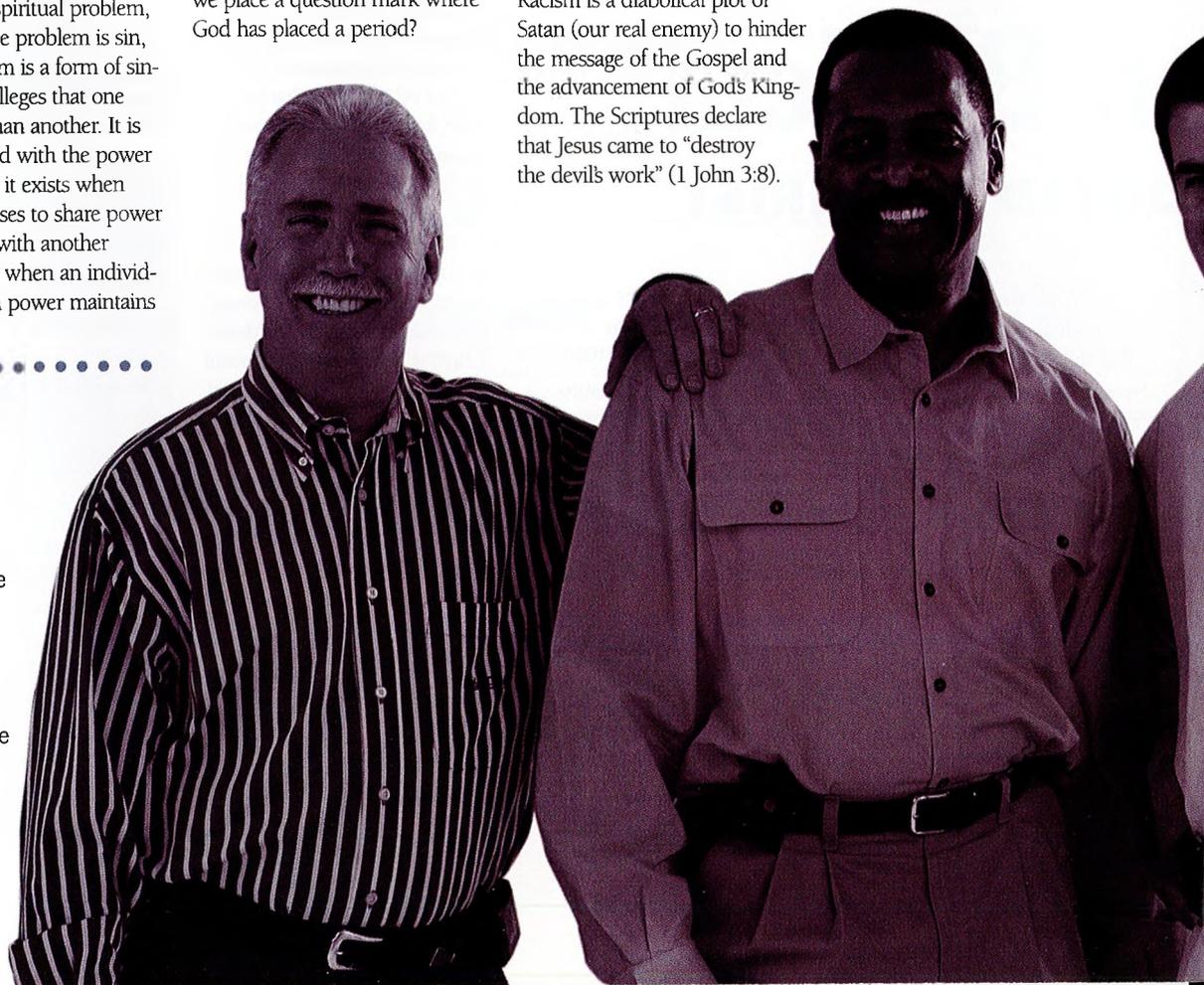
Christ did this through His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave. Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us that we are saved by grace not by race.

Biblical Solutions:

- ▲ **The love of Christ compels us to love one another.** Legislation alone will not solve the problem, but Christlike love will. We must go the extra mile when renewing relationships of trust and trustworthiness, seeing each other as partners in ministry rather than enemies in society (2 Cor. 5:14).
- ▲ **We must choose ethnic evangelism over ethnic cleansing.** We must see one another as Christ sees us. Racism is only one of many obstacles in the world today; it is an obstacle, not an excuse. We should continue to call for individual and collective

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. What incidents and influences in your background do you think helped you in developing or diminishing your racial or cross-cultural prejudices? What was the standard response in your family to the subject of racism?
2. What are some of your racial prejudices? Describe an inter-racial communication or dialogue in which you have participated. Was it a positive or negative experience?
3. Discuss some biblical solutions to racial prejudice.



Equal Before God

BY U.S. SEN. SAM BROWNBAC (R-KAN.)

repentance and forgiveness (especially among believers in Christ), so that we can fulfill the "Great Commission" (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 5:15-20).

▲ We must recognize that we are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

- We are to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16).
- We are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Pet. 2:9).
- We have no fear of man, for "perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:7-8, 16-21; 2 Tim. 1:7).
- We are called to be ambassadors for Christ on a mission with a Kingdom agenda. Our assignment is to bring the message and ministry of reconciliation to a lost and dying world that so desperately needs it (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

Since our nation's founding, the United States has been the protector of freedom around the world. It has been said that ours is the only nation deliberately founded on a noble idea—that human beings must be free because they are equal before God, and endowed by Him with inalienable rights. America has risen to greatness with recognition of this truth but has plunged into gross injustice and tragedy when it was ignored. Nowhere is this illustrated more clearly than with the institution of slavery.

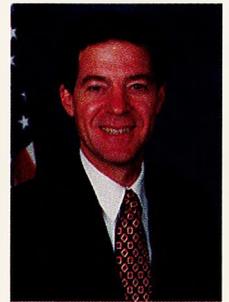
Federal protection of this terrible practice, through the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 and the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision of 1857, was bound to have long-term repercussions. The bitterness that is born of such barbarism is not easily uprooted. The Bible warns us to be wary, "that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble" (Heb. 12:15).

We cannot undo the practice of slavery in America, but we can learn from it, though the lessons about the depth of our sinful nature are hard. We often seek to avert our gaze from ugly periods in our history. Only by squarely facing our past can we learn from it and help ensure that similar injustice will never happen again. We must also recognize and honor those who not only endured, but triumphed over injustice. The courage of Sojourner Truth, the resolution of Dred Scott, and the strength of Frederick Douglass all shine brighter against the backdrop of this dark period.

In the 107th Congress, I will introduce legislation with Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), that creates a congressional commission charged with recommending the establishment and maintenance of a museum honoring and commemorating the lives and contributions of African Americans who suffered slavery in this country. It will focus on both the experiences of those in bondage as well as those who triumphed over persecution. The museum will be funded primarily through private donations. This will continue the much needed process of racial reconciliation.

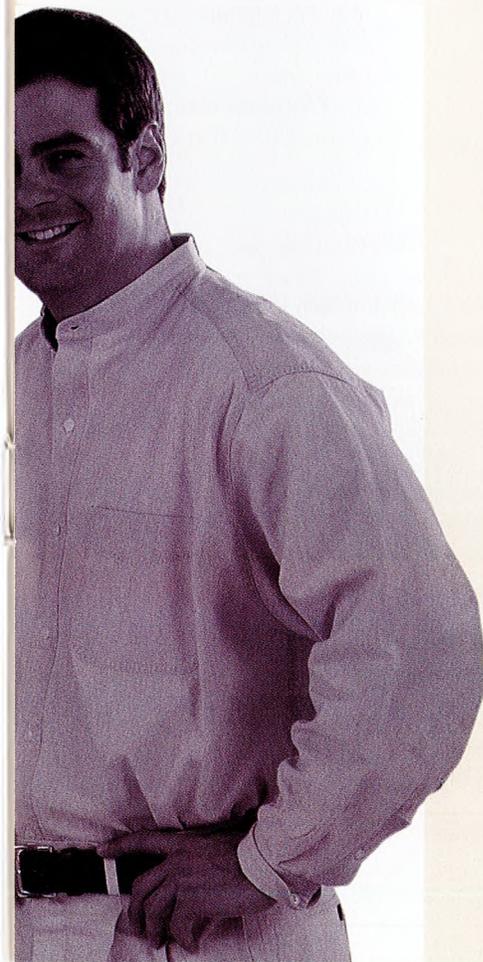
Our country must find ways to reconcile the deep divisions that still exist today because of slavery and its aftermath. In his second inaugural address at the close of the Civil War, President Lincoln said, "With malice toward none, with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive . . . to bind up the nation's wounds . . ." Lincoln knew that the wounds went deep, and would take many years to heal.

Rep. Lewis and I do not pretend that our legislation is a panacea, but it can be a productive step toward recognizing the truth, healing the wounds, and increasing our vigilance in protecting the rights and dignity of all God's children. We have an extraordinary opportunity before us—a chance to learn, understand, and remember together our nation's history and to honor all Americans.



Sen. Sam Brownback

Born in Parker, Kan., Sen. Brownback currently serves on four key committees: the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; the Committee on Foreign Relations; and the Joint Economic Committee.

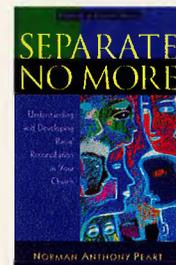


RECOMMENDED READING

Separate No More

As racism continues to exist in American culture, the church fights for answers to this ever-present problem. Dr. Norman Anthony Peart takes an in-depth look at the ins and outs of racism in American churches.

Offering historical reasoning and scriptural methods, *Separate No More* shows that racial reconciliation must be at the heart of the church's message. It also offers insights into how we, as Christians, can pursue the goal of making intentional choices to accept, represent, and manifest racial and ethnic differences, while magnifying the unity of the body of Christ.



©2000 by Norman Anthony Peart, Baker Books, ISBN 0-8010-6337-X

Hearing
stories
isn't
hearing
cries.

Now hear
them both.

Ambon's silent scream

Available on video
from the International
Mission Board:

www.imb.org/video

1-800-866-3621

\$5.00 per copy

Remember.

The Maluku Islands have been embroiled in conflict since January 1999, when a minor dispute between a Muslim and a Christian escalated into rioting on Ambon. Some feel the incident was intentional, meant to motivate Ambon Muslims to retaliate against their Christian neighbors and help an extremist Muslim faction overtake the moderate Indonesian government. Ambon has been historically Christian within overwhelmingly Muslim Indonesia.

Well-armed Muslim jihad ("holy war") troops poured into the Malukus with support from extremists within the Indonesian army. Attacks on Christians began; retaliation on Muslims followed.

According to an e-mail circulated in July 2000 quoting a Baptist pastor in Indonesia: "The Laskar Jihad [Banner of Holy War] command has openly announced through loudspeakers that [they and the Indonesian military] will exterminate all Christians in Ambon [City]. All inhabitants who wish to survive have been given an ultimatum to leave the city before July 31."

That warning and attacks all over the island have driven as many as 500,000 Christians from their homes. Over 4,000 have been killed, and reports of atrocities abound. Aid organizations have fled the island, and food, clothing, and medical care are scarce. SBC representative Charles Cole asks for prayer for Indonesian Christians: "Pray that [children] will have a sense that God has not forgotten them nor neglected them. . . . Remember [the elderly] as they've seen everything they've ever known destroyed. . . . that they might have joy within their hearts."

Hear Charles Cole talk about needs in Ambon at www.imb.org/frontpage.htm. For information on a postcard drive conducted by Jubilee Campaign on behalf of Ambonese Christians, e-mail 100675.670@compuserve.com. Encourage our government to act on behalf of persecuted Christians in the Maluku Islands:

U.S. Embassy in Jakarta
e-mail jakconsul@state.gov
fax 62-21-386-2259

To contact the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D.C., e-mail correspondence to poldiv-kbriwash@erols.com or fax to (202) 775-5365.

This information was compiled from Baptist Press reports.

"It's a strange feeling to talk to someone and know — I mean, to be almost sure — that he will be dead in a few days, if not sooner. He looked to be about 15 years old. He tried to keep a stern, defiant glare on his face as he showed off his weapons of war: a quiver of homemade arrows tipped with rusty nails, cardboard for the feathers."

Russell Rankin of the International Mission Board, describing a young Christian on Ambon

You've been asking...

V-CHIP HELPS PARENTS MONITOR TV VIEWING

BY KAREN COLE

Don't look now, but that new television set in your living room has a feature you probably aren't even aware of.

As a reaction to the growing public outcry over the deluge of violence and sexual situations on television, Congress passed the Telecommunications Act of 1996 in February of that year. This legislation mandated installation of the V-chip in half of all 13" or larger televisions manufactured after July 1, 1999 and all sets 13" or larger manufactured after January 1, 2000. And for the most part, American consumers have responded with a collective yawn.

The V-chip is technology built into a television set that "reads" the rating for a particular program. The television can then be programmed to block programs with particular ratings.

All new sets include V-chip programming instructions in one or two places: an on-screen menu that displays set-up options once the TV has been turned on, and/or a written instruction guide included with the operator's manual.

Cable networks and television stations are required to provide rating information to newspapers and publishers of printed and electronic program guides, and the ratings

icons and content symbols appear for 15 seconds at the beginning of all rated programming.

The V-chip can be programmed to block by age-based rating, content rating, or a combination of the two. Many television sets allow parents to block a specific program based on date, time, and channel.

A study by the California-based Kaiser Foundation in 1999 discovered that just over a third of persons polled were even aware of the ratings or how to use the V-chip. Television manufacturers and salespeople have done little to promote the power of the V-chip, and networks have for the most part failed to make the viewing public aware of the value of this technological innovation.

Groups with varied agendas have protested the V-chip and the system of television ratings. The ACLU claims it is a form of censorship; the Parents Television Council offers statistics to show that instances of on-screen sexual references, foul language, and violence have escalated since the television industry was given greater license to broadcast these things, under the assumption that parents now had fair warning.

And, according to an elec-

It's not a mutant of the elusive V-chip or a new cartoon character — It's a weemote™.

Sorry, Dad, but this colorful and ergonomically designed mini-television remote is for toddlers only. Parents easily program five "safe" channels into the universal unit, allowing younger TV viewers in your home to access only those particular channels using the uniquely shaped buttons. The weemote™ does not disable the controls on your television or your standard television remote, so the device is useful only for children who are unable to access these controls. While the best decision for most families is for children's television viewing to be supervised by a responsible adult, the weemote™ does allow a child to hold tight to his own remote and channel-surf in a controlled environment. For more information on weemote™, visit www.fobis.com or phone (877) 993-3668 to order the unit direct. [Retail \$29.99]



tronics salesman quoted in the *Washington Times* (June 29, 1999), youngsters are technologically poised to override any restrictions imposed on their TV viewing. "I think they [V-chips] won't catch on," he said. "Most kids nowadays know how to use technology better than their parents. With Internet tips and word-of-mouth, kids will be sure to find a way around V-chips." ❏

• **As a result of the 1996 legislation**, in early 1997 the networks implemented a system of age-based parental guidance ratings: **TV-Y** (All Children), **TV-Y7** (Older Children), **TV-G** (General Audience), **TV-PG** (Parental Guidance Suggested), **TV-14** (Parents Strongly Cautioned), and **TV-MA** (Mature Audience Only). In mid-1997, they expanded it to include more specific content ratings: **V** (violence), **FV** (fantasy violence), **S** (sexual situations), **D** (suggestive dialogue, usually about sex), and **L** (crude or indecent language).

Unity

**FEBRUARY EMPHASIS:
RACIAL RECONCILIATION**

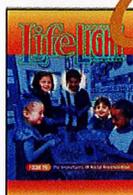
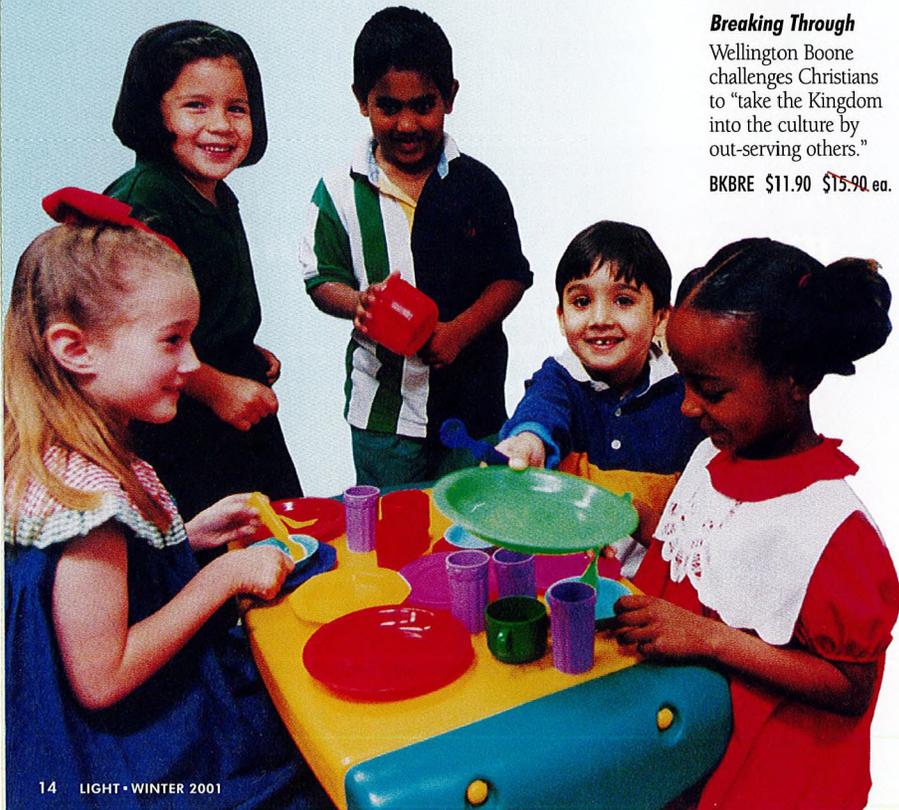
**SUGGESTED FOCUS SUNDAY:
FEB. 11, 2001**

The second Sunday in February is set aside to address the problems of racial prejudice and injustice. While some progress has been made, the alarming rise in racial tensions in America and elsewhere in the world points to the need for improved race relations on a global scale. Scripture is very clear—Christ has reconciled us to God; we are then empowered to reconcile one to another. The products at right are just a few of those offered by the ERLC that focus on this important issue. To order resources or obtain a color catalog with additional product information, contact us at:

1.800.475.9127

orders@erlc.com

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are instituting a streamlined, more cost-efficient process to promote the SBC emphasis Sundays. Thus, you will not be receiving a separate promotional mailer. We encourage you to order materials for this critically important Sunday today.



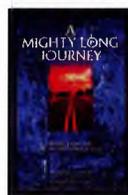
LifeLight

This undated publication includes real-life scenarios, biblical application, statistics, action points, and resources. It can be used as a bulletin insert or hand-out when addressing racial unity.

RABULK \$3.50/50

Racial Reconciliation Poster

RAPOS \$95 ea.



A Mighty Long Journey

Timothy George and Robert Smith reflect on the state of affairs of race relations in the church, the sins of the past, repentance in the present, and redemption for the future.

BKMIG \$17.99 ea.

Race Sermon Outline

RASER (individual) \$.25 ea.
RASERU (bulk) \$4.00/20



Healing America's Wounds*

This book provides a biblical road map toward Christ-centered reconciliation and is a must-read for all who pray and labor toward a spiritual awakening in our nation.

BKHEA \$10.45 ea.

Race Fact Sheet

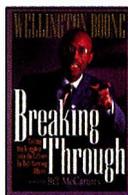
RAFACU \$4.00/20



Beyond Black and White

Racial bigotry is an enemy of God that traps its victims in a cycle of hatred. For those who have avoided confronting tough reconciliation issues, this book offers practical avenues for replacing the facade of false harmony with true oneness in Christ.

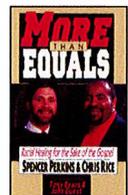
BKBEY \$8.75 \$11.55 ea.



Breaking Through

Wellington Boone challenges Christians to "take the Kingdom into the culture by out-serving others."

BKBRE \$11.90 \$15.90 ea.



More Than Equals*

Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice present a model of intentional unity, crossing barriers for racial harmony as well as the furtherance of the Gospel.

BKMOR \$4.00 \$5.00 ea.

Issues & Answers: Human Rights

This pamphlet takes a look at what Christians can do individually and as a church to champion human rights in domestic and international arenas.

IAHUMU \$3.40/20

Critical Issues: Refugees

This pamphlet offers scriptural insights and a look at the Christian's responsibility to refugees throughout the world.

CIRAFU \$6.50/20



Leon's Story*

Leon Walter Tillage shares his story of a strong family and the love that bound them together amid cruelty and tragedy... and working to change an oppressive existence.

BKLE9 \$9.25 \$14.00 ea.

Issues & Answers: Race Relations

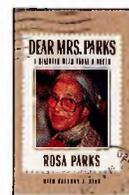
This pamphlet examines race from a biblical perspective and encourages accepting an attitude of change in the home, church, and community.

IRARACU \$3.40/20

Racism and the Evangelical Church

Evangelist Billy Graham defines racial and ethnic hatred as sin and offers Christians insights for reconciliation.

RARACU \$1.80/20



Dear Mrs. Parks*

On Dec. 1, 1955, Rosa Parks changed the course of history when she refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, launching the 381-day boycott of the Montgomery bus system by African Americans. *Dear Mrs. Parks* is a collection of letters between Rosa Parks and children over the last 40 years in which she challenges young people to be a force for positive change in society.

BKDEA \$7.40 \$10.99 ea.

The Bible Speaks on Race

This pamphlet offers examples from Scripture which can be applied to race issues, evidencing God's sovereignty to all people.

BSRACU \$3.80/20

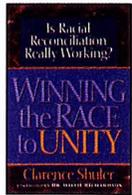
*Limited quantities in stock.



Inner City Child Shares Lessons for Children from All Walks of Life

Entertaining and insightful, these delightful hardback books in the "Our Neighborhood" series will introduce you to a curious, resourceful, and responsible youngster who lives in the inner city. Enid faces the kind of real-life situations confronting far too many children in today's world. These stories will speak to children and adults alike — no matter if you live in the city or in the country.

- Enid and the Dangerous Discovery*** (Guns) BKENIDD \$11.00 ea.
- Enid and the Church Fire*** BKENIDC \$11.00 ea.
- Enid and the Great Idea*** (The Environment) BKENIDG \$11.00 ea.
- Enid and the Homecoming*** (Adoption and Acceptance) BKENIDH \$11.00 ea.



Winning the Race to Unity

This book contends that the gulf between white and African-American Christians is as wide as it has ever been. Clarence Shuler shares the blessings that can be ours if we seriously consider the issues that separate us and obediently follow Jesus.

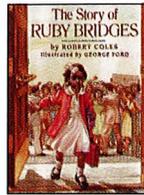
BKRAC \$11.99 ea.



Colors Come from God... Just Like Me!

This hardback children's book is written from the perspective of an African-American girl who shares about the many things God created and their beauty in the diversity of colors God gave them.

BKCOL \$7.25 \$11.90 ea.



The Story of Ruby Bridges

The first black child to attend an all-white elementary school, Ruby faces angry mobs as she is escorted to and from first grade by federal marshalls. This hardback children's book shares how her courageous example became an important part of American history.

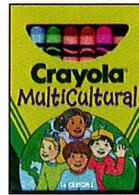
BKSTO \$12.00 \$19.40 ea.



Coloring Poster and Activities Booklet

The 11"x17" poster includes a diverse group of children in a neighborhood parade. The 8-page booklet (above) contains coloring pages to help children see similarities among people and learn how to respond to differences.

RACHIU (poster) \$1.50/20
RAKIN (booklet) \$.85 ea.



Colors of the World*

This set of crayons includes a variety of skin, hair, and eye colors for coloring people of the world. When used with the children's coloring poster or activity booklet at left, they make a great tool to teach children to "love one another" across racial and ethnic lines.

RACRA \$1.25 \$1.65 ea.

Southern Baptists Face Racial Issues

This video serves as a reminder of the racism that existed in the past and a call to action to combat the prejudice that still permeates the Southern Baptist Convention.

VTRAC (22 min.) \$9.95 ea.

The Bible & Race

This pamphlet by Paul Griffin Jones and Elizabeth King Holmes clarifies passages from Scripture that are often misinterpreted and used to support and perpetuate racist attitudes.

RABIBU \$6.80/20

ORDER FORM

To order Racial Reconciliation resources, complete this form and MAIL TO Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, 901 Commerce St, Suite 550, Nashville, TN 37203, CALL (800) 475-9127, FAX TO (615) 242-0065, or E-MAIL TO orders@erlc.com. MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. U.S. funds only.

WE CAN BILL YOU OR YOUR CHURCH. BILL PAID AMOUNT: \$

QTY.	PRODUCT CODE	DESCRIPTION	PRICE EA.	\$ TOTAL
	RABULK	LifeLight (Racial Reconciliation, 50 per pack)	3.50	

SHIP TO (CHURCH NAME IF APPLICABLE) _____ ATTN: _____

STREET ADDRESS (REQUIRED FOR SHIPPING) _____ COMMERCIAL RESIDENTIAL

P.O. BOX (FOR BILLING ONLY) _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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We prefer to use UPS Ground Service (requires up to 7 business days for delivery; continental U.S. only). Rush shipping is available for an additional charge. UPS provides insurance and tracking in case of damage or delay. UPS shipping charges are as follows:

\$1.00 - \$14.99	\$4.00
\$15.00 - \$29.99	\$4.50
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\$60.00 - \$84.99	\$6.70
\$85.00 - \$109.99	\$8.10
\$110.00 & UP	8% OF TOTAL

ADDITIONAL SHIPPING NOTE: Shipment via the U.S. Postal Service is available on some small orders. Please place your order using our toll-free number to utilize USPS shipping. Tracking and insurance are not available with this service.

Use separate sheet for additional items.

SUBTOTAL _____

SHIPPING _____

TOTAL _____

Setting a Foundation for Christian Life

Where did I come from?

One day I planted a seed in a milk carton. I pushed the little seed into the dirt and put the carton next to the window in our kitchen. The sun warmed the dirt in the carton. Every day I poured water on the dirt. One time I poured too much water in the carton and it spilled. But it was okay because my Mom knew I didn't mean to do it. My Dad said I was a regular little farmer.

For three days, I looked at the carton a lot because my Mom said God would make the seed grow into a little plant. Then I forgot about the carton and the seed. I guess I got tired of waiting for that little plant to show up.

Then one day, my Mom called me and told me to look closely in the dirt. There was a little green plant trying to stick its head up through the dirt. I was very happy for the little seed. It was now a plant. I told my Mom I might want to be a farmer when I grow up.



You might have asked your Mom or Dad, "Where did I come from?" The little green plant came from a seed you planted in the dirt, but you know your Mom and Dad didn't grow you in the garden in your backyard. But just like God made that little green plant grow, God made you, too. You are much more special than a little green plant. God made you to be just who you are—so very special and loved by your family.

In a way like you make things with Play-Dough®, the Bible says that God shaped you to be just who you are. The Bible tells us about somebody knitting or sewing a piece of clothing to show us that God Himself puts us together. He knows all about you. God really cares for you. You are specially made. You came from God. Your Mom and Dad are really happy about that!

Bible truth: Take comfort in the precious fact that God specially created you.

Bible verses: Psalm 100:3; 139:13-16; Isaiah 49:1

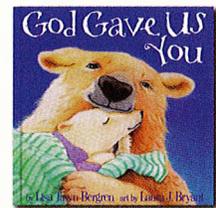
RECOMMENDED READING

God Gave Us You

When a polar bear cub asks her mama: "Where did I come from?" Mama Bear communicates the message that loving parents everywhere want their little ones to hear: "We wanted you. We are glad because God gave us you."

This book provides an opportunity to build children's self-esteem every day and assure each one that he or she is truly a welcomed and treasured gift from above.

©2000 by Lisa Tawn Bergren, WaterBrook Press, ISBN 1-57856-323-2



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